

What Missionaries Ought to Know...

A Handbook for Life and Service

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Preface

I did not set out to write a book. However, in the late 1990s I did set out to make material on member care available to anyone anywhere at any time. At no previous time in history has that been possible, but with the invention of the Internet in the late twentieth century it became a reality for missionaries nearly anywhere in the world to access material posted there. As search engines have improved more missionaries have found the material.

Some missionaries did not have Internet access, but they did have email, so I could send the material to them anywhere at a moment's notice at their request. In addition, people working in member care in mission agencies asked for these as attachments so they could distribute them to the missionaries for whom they were providing care.

Some missionaries did not have email (or they had it but had to pay by the kilobyte to download), so I printed the material in a series of "brochures." I could send these to people who had postal service anywhere in the world. People working in member care could also copy these and send them to missionaries in their agencies.

I did not set out with an outline or a preconceived set of topics. However, I wrote one item (depression, because it is the "common cold" of psychological problems) and asked missionaries

who read it to suggest other topics. Each article on the web page said, “You are invited to suggest other topics you would like to know about to the following...” Each emailed and each printed brochure ended with, “This brochure is one of a series, and you are invited to suggest other topics you would like to know about to the following...” Most of the chapters in this book are a result of missionaries’ suggestions.

Member care workers in several countries requested permission to translate the chapters into other languages, and they did so, distributing them to missionaries individually or publishing them in periodicals. Friedhilde Stricker translated them into German, and Verlan fur Kultur and Wissenschaft published *Was Missionare wissen sollten... Ein Handbuch fur Leben und Dienst* in 2003. Although I have never personally met Mrs. Stricker, I want to express my deep gratitude to her for translating the material and having it published in book form.

Of course, no author can express adequate thanks to everyone who had a part in developing a book. However, I want to thank all my colleagues in the Psychology and English Departments at Asbury College, with special thanks to three of them who made the most significant contributions. Art Nonneman read every brochure and made many invaluable comments over a period of more than five years. Marty Seitz co-authored several of the chapters with me, and his name appears on those. Yvonne Moulton did the final editing to correct grammar and punctuation as well as make sure the right meaning was conveyed. Art, Marty and Yvonne deserve credit for many good things in the book, but they are certainly not responsible for any shortcomings.

Finally, there is no way to adequately describe the contribution my wife, Bonnie, has made. We have talked to missionaries together, presented material together in seminars and orientation. We have led reentry retreats together. She has cooked hundreds of meals for TCKs in our home, and she has proofread everything I have written. Though not recognizable, her input is found on every page.

Introduction

What Missionaries Ought to know... does not mean that the author sat down and decided what missionaries ought to know, but that missionaries themselves asked about these topics. During my 35 years of college teaching I learned that if one person asks a question, others probably want to know the same thing—and if two people ask, it was certainly a topic that others need to know about. These are things missionaries need to know because several missionaries have asked about each of them at one time or another.

Since *EMQ* is so widely read by missionaries, I emulated the *EMQ* style when writing the chapters. They are short; each one can be read in a few minutes. In fact, each chapter can be printed on two sides of a sheet of paper from a legal pad. They are written in non-technical language, meant to be an “easy read.” They present basic facts simply and include practical applications to missionary life and work. In a January 2001 *EMQ* article titled “Virtual Missionary Care,” Scott Moreau and Mike O’Rear said that the chapters “deal with practical mental health topics...providing practical advice without charge to the missions public” (p. 83).

Much of my professional life has been devoted to the integration of psychology and Christianity as reflected in the titles of my two more “academic” books, *Psychology from a Christian Perspective* and *General Psychology for Christian Counselors*. Although this book is not highly documented with numerous

Scripture references, I have tried to present the best current knowledge in mental health within an evangelical Christian perspective. From time to time I have cited specific passages of Scripture to support particular points.

As often as possible I have illustrated concepts by using cross-cultural examples from the Bible. Joseph was a great example of forgiveness, and Daniel had an excellent set of priorities. I have used examples of missionaries in the Bible, ranging from Jonah's problem with anger to Paul's wonderful examples of transitions such as reentry. Early missionaries sometimes handled conflict marvelously, such as Paul and Barnabas in Acts 15 when settling an important theological issue. Then the same two individuals turned around (in the same chapter) and parted company, arguing about who was going to accompany them on their second term of missionary service.

The book is meant to be a handbook with short chapters on particular topics of interest. The chapters are not intended as in-depth treatments of the topics but as brief overviews with practical suggestions as well. The book is not written with a unified theme gradually developed from chapter to chapter. Each chapter stands alone. However, the chapters do fall into several categories, so they are grouped into six parts, each part consisting of chapters on related topics.

So if you are interested in a particular topic, just go immediately to that chapter and read about it. You do not need to read the first 20 chapters to understand the material in chapter 21. I trust that this material will be helpful. If you do not find a chapter on a topic you are interested in, I invite you to email me suggesting that topic. If several do, I will write a chapter on it.

Part 1.

Beginning with Basics

We begin with the basic things that all missionaries face as they minister to people in other cultures. Like other people, missionaries ought to maintain their mental and physical health, and following the two greatest commandments will result in such health. Missionaries have always lived under great stress, but they seem to be feeling even more stress recently. The chapter on stress and the hints in the chapter on time management in time-oriented cultures will help missionaries reduce the stress they feel.

Everyone has expectations, and missionaries are no exception whether anticipating going to the field or returning to their passport country. The chapter about expectations should help make these expectations more realistic. Missionaries say more goodbyes than most people, and such goodbyes are very difficult. The chapter about goodbyes may not make them any easier, but at least missionaries will realize that they are normal in the feelings they have about them. Most people now expect to experience difficulty as they enter another culture, but many are surprised by the reverse culture shock of reentry. The chapter about reentry makes it clear that changing cultures either way is difficult.

1

... about Maintaining Health (Mental and Physical)

A missionary asked, “What do you do when there are so many things to do, and not enough people to do them, and there’s no way to prioritize because everything’s a priority? This seems like a no-win situation and can lead to quick burnout. Because of such a high level of ministry responsibilities on the field, there’s no time for rest, renewal, or recreation, much less trying to be proactive and keep the body in shape, or to have quality time with the family.”

In this one paragraph the missionary has touched on the most important factors relating to maintaining your mental and physical health. Let us consider what we can do by considering our priorities.

Schedule your priorities.

The missionary was right in talking about priorities. Some people may tell you to “prioritize your schedule,” but it is much more important to “schedule your priorities.”

When you prioritize your schedule, you constantly feel under great stress, but you may accomplish little of lasting value. You may become one who is constantly putting out fires, rather than preventing the fires in the first place. Prevention is better than cure.

What is most important?

Jesus was asked this question in Mathew 22 when an expert in the law asked him which commandment was the greatest. Jesus told him to love God with all his heart, soul, and mind. Of course, Jesus was quoting Deuteronomy 5 where Moses had told the people to love God with all their soul, heart, and strength. The command to love God motivationally, emotionally, physically, and cognitively has been around for centuries, and it is still valid today.

You may say that this command is certainly relevant to your spiritual condition, but what does it have to do with your mental and physical health. Consider the following quotes from an article by Harold Koenig in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* in October, 2000.

- “More than 850 studies have now examined the relationship between religious involvement and various aspects of mental health. Between two thirds and three quarters of these have found that people experience better mental health and adapt more successfully to stress if they are religious.”
- “An additional 350 studies have examined religious involvement and health. The majority of these have found that religious people are physically healthier, lead healthier lifestyles, and require fewer health services. The magnitude of the possible impact on physical health—particularly survival—may approximate that of abstaining from cigarette smoking, or adding 7 to 14 years to life.”

The best thing you can do to maintain your mental and physical health is to place your relationship with God on your schedule first. This should be time for at least the following:

- Spending time with him
- Talking to him in prayer
- Listening to him through meditating on his Word
- Seeking forgiveness and reconciliation

Like missionaries Daniel lived and worked in a culture different from the one in which he was reared. With his packed schedule of doing an outstanding job as one of the three top administrators in the nation, one might think that Daniel would not

have much time for God. However, his custom was to be on his knees thanking God for what he had done and asking for his help three times a day (Daniel 6).

What is second most important?

When asked what was most important in Matthew 22, Jesus went on to say that the second most important was much like it, to love your neighbor as yourself. Of course, this had also been around for centuries as Jesus was quoting from Leviticus 19. This is especially relevant for missionaries as Jesus emphasized in John 13:34-35, that people will know we are his disciples by how we love each other.

No recent evidence is needed to support this. We have known for years that your social support system is one of the most important factors in maintaining your health, both physical and mental. This includes a variety of people. The specific persons depend on your situation in life, but probably include some of the following.

- Your spouse
- Your children and teenagers
- Fellow missionaries
- Nationals
- Aging parents
- Etc.

To maintain your mental and physical health, place your relationship with fellow Christians as the second thing on your schedule. This should be time for at least the following:

- Spending time with them
- Talking to them
- Listening to them
- Seeking forgiveness and reconciliation

When faced with a crisis of life and death proportions, Daniel had a long-term relationship with three other expatriates to whom he

could turn to ask for urgent prayers. Their prayers were answered (Daniel 2).

What is third most important?

Jesus said we should love our neighbor as we loved ourselves. Like loving God and loving our neighbor, loving ourselves means at least the following:

- Setting aside some time for yourself
- Thinking correctly about yourself (your self-talk, as a person made in God's image)
- Generally taking care of God's temple (our bodies)

God dwelt in the Tabernacle, then in the Temple, and now dwells in us. The apostle Paul pointed out that our bodies were the temple of the Holy Spirit so we should honor God with our body (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). So the question becomes, how are we doing in taking care of God's Temple? That includes at least the following:

- Eating right. At creation (Genesis 1) God gave us all the seed-bearing plants and fruit trees to eat—that is grains, vegetables and fruits. That is very much like the recommendations of the US Department of Agriculture's food pyramid. After the Fall when we began eating meat, God put a number of restrictions on what kinds of meat and what parts of the animals we could eat. As a college student in a culture very different from home, Daniel questioned the food in the cafeteria. He proposed and conducted an experiment showing that vegetables and water are healthier than rich food and alcohol, an experiment repeated with the same results many times over the centuries (Daniel 1).
- Getting rest. God instituted a day of rest in each week in the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20). This was a day in which no one in the household was to do any work, a day of restoration in each week. Jesus later pointed out that the Sabbath was made for us, not us for the Sabbath (Mark 2). New research points out that sleep (rest) is an essential component of a long and healthy life. Although two kings had difficulty sleeping (Daniel 2 & 4), there is no indication that Daniel every had that problem even though

his circumstances were far more dangerous than those of either king.

- Exercising regularly. Although not mentioned as much as food and rest, Paul wrote that physical training is of some value (not as valuable as godliness, which is valuable for both this life and the next). When he wrote that, there were not so many “labor saving” devices so that people got sufficient exercise in the tasks of daily living. Today we do not, so it is best for us to schedule exercise in our day. We have to stretch things somewhat to find an example of exercise in the book of Daniel. Although we do not recommend walking in fiery furnaces (Daniel 3), we do recommend walking, running, playing your favorite sport, etc. past the point of perspiration for at least a half hour several times a week.

You may wonder what eating, rest, and exercise have to do with mental health. In general psychology the three major categories to help cope with stress:

- Social support (Priority 2)
 - Aerobic exercise (Priority 3)
 - Time for relaxation (Priority 3)
- Six characteristics of happy people are that they tend to have

the following:

- A meaningful faith (Priority 1)
- Close friendship or a satisfying marriage (Priority 2)
- Good sleep and exercise (Priority 3)
- Work and leisure that engage their skills (Priority 3)
- High self-esteem (created in God’s image)
- Optimism

What is new about all this?

Nothing. For thousands of years people have known these things. The problem is in doing them. When the expert in the law asked Jesus about important things in Luke 10, Jesus asked him what the law said, and he replied that one should love God and love your

neighbor as yourself. Jesus told him he was right—that he should just go do it. Then, to justify himself the expert asked who his neighbor was. Jesus told the parable of the Good Samaritan, and then he asked the expert who was the neighbor. Again the expert answered correctly, and again Jesus told him to go and do it. Like the expert in the law, we know what we should do, we often just do not do it and try to justify our not doing it.

2

...about Laughter

When Martha first became field director, she had a mixture of emotions toward Peter. Martha was annoyed when Peter cracked jokes during field meetings, genuinely liked him because he was so funny, and envied him because he was so popular among other missionaries.

As time went on she came to really appreciate Peter for what he did. Martha realized that she was often so intent on getting the job done that she needed someone like Peter to temper her intensity at times. She came to value his jokes and no longer envied his popularity.

What Martha did not realize was that Peter and people like him are more than just a help to leaders in maintaining team unity, they are valuable in many other ways including physical health, mental health, and social relationships in general.

Physical Health

People often say that laughter is the best medicine, and that is often literally the case. Laughter brings healing and renewal through the following physical changes.

- It relaxes muscles all over the body, and that relaxation may last for up to an hour.
- It lowers stress hormones which have an effect on the whole body.

- It releases endorphins which make people feel good and may even relieve pain.
- It boosts the immune system making it less likely that individuals will become ill.
- Although blood pressure may rise briefly during laughter, such laughter lowers blood pressure overall.
- It helps people relax and fall asleep.
- It has many of the effects of exercise (although it cannot replace exercise).

Mental Health

Laughter is good for mind as well as body. Here are some mental health benefits.

- It makes individuals feel good so they can keep an optimistic outlook.
- It reduces anxiety, fear, anger, and sadness.
- It helps people relax so they can stay focused to complete tasks.
- It allows individuals to see things from a more realistic point of view.
- It creates psychological distance to keep people from feeling overwhelmed.

Social Relationships

Shared laughter is good medicine for social relationships. It is a requirement for strong relationships and has the following effects.

- It produces positive feelings to strengthen emotional connections.
- It produces a bond which protects against stress and disagreements.
- It allows individuals to lower their defensiveness so that they can disregard criticisms and doubts.
- It lowers inhibitions so that people stop holding back and avoiding others.

- It lets individuals be more spontaneous and express their true feelings.

In general mutual laughter heals resentments and hurts helping to unite people during difficult times and see each other's points of view.

Laughter in the Bible

Not all laughter is good for us. The Bible mentions two kinds. Basically "laughing at" someone is bad, and "laughing with" someone is good. Laughing at someone in scorn or ridicule is not good medicine. Here are some examples.

- They will laugh at him saying... (Psalm 52:6).
- I have become a laughingstock to my friends (Job 12:4).
- But they laughed at him (Matthew 9:24).

Here are some examples of laughter as good medicine.

- He will fill your mouth with laughter and your lips with shouts of joy (Job 8:21).
- A feast is made for laughter (Ecclesiastes 10:19).
- Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with shouts of joy (Psalm 126:2).

The same event may produce both kinds of laughter in the same people at different times. This was the case with Abraham and Sarah in events surrounding the birth of Isaac. When God told them they would have a child, both laughed in derision.

- Abraham fell facedown; he laughed and said to himself... (Genesis 17:17).
- Sarah laughed to herself as she thought about it (Genesis 18:12).
- God was not pleased with their laughter and rebuked them—and then rebuked Sarah's lie about it (Genesis 18:13-15).

After Isaac was born, Sarah laughed, but this time it was healthy laughter.

- Sarah said, "God has brought me laughter, and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me" (Genesis 21:6).

- At God's command, Abraham gave the name Isaac (Laughter) to the son Sarah had borne (Genesis 17:19 and Genesis 21:3).
Who says that God has no sense of humor?

Jesus' Humor

Asking parents to name their child "Laughter" after they laughed in derision when told they would have a baby shows God's sense of humor. Likewise, we find Jesus' sense of humor as he talked to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24). Here are the events from their point of view.

- They were walking along the road when a man they did not recognize joined them (vv15-16).
- Jesus asked them what they were talking about, as if he did not know (v 17).
- One of them asked Jesus if he knew what had happened in Jerusalem (v18).
- Jesus asked, "What things?" as if he did not know (v19).
- They told him about the crucifixion, as well as their dashed hopes, and confusion (vv19-24).
- Jesus called them foolish, rebuked them, and asked if Christ had to suffer (vv 25-26).
- Then he explained prophetic Scriptures, still not revealing who he was (v 27).
- When they neared home, he pretended he was going on, still not telling (v28).
- They urged him to stay with them, so he did, still not telling (v29).
- As they ate with him, he gave thanks and broke bread—and suddenly they recognized him! (vv30-31).
- Then he disappeared! (v31).

Of course, then they remembered cues that should have let them know who he was. Imagine yourself in Jesus place watching their puzzlement and laughing inside!

Getting Started

Anyone can get in on laughter which is free, fun, and easy to use. Living in another culture provides many things to laugh about. Here are some tips on getting started.

- Count your blessings. It is harder to begin laughing when thinking about things that make you sad, so literally write down a list of things you are thankful for, such as medicines that prevent or cure diseases.
- Smile at people. Like laughter, smiling is contagious in most cultures. People will often return your smile, and that may lead to laughter.
- Laugh at yourself. Stop taking yourself so seriously. Instead of trying to hide your embarrassing moments, share them with others so that everyone, colleagues, nationals and even you can get a good laugh.
- Move toward laughter. Sometimes laughter is the result of an “inside” joke for a small group, but more often it is “public,” and people enjoy telling it again. If you do not understand, ask, “What’s so funny?” Not understanding humor often occurs before you know the culture well.
- Keep things in perspective. We cannot control many things that happen to us, especially the actions of other people toward us. Rather than getting angry, laugh about those absurdities in life in both your passport and host cultures.
- Read the comics. I enjoy “Pickles” because it pokes fun at people my age. The cover on one of the books of those comic strips on our table says, “The older I get, the better I was.
- Watch a funny TV show that you like. “Americas Funniest Videos” makes me laugh out loud, but my wife empathizes with people who fall down or run into things. DVDs of your favorite funny shows are probably available.
- Hang out with funny people. Find other missionaries who can laugh at themselves and at the absurdities of life and can find humor in a variety of things.

- Spend some time with children. Young TCKs know how to play and take life lightly. They can laugh at nearly anything.
- Post reminders to “lighten up” on your office wall or screen saver. How about a picture of yourself with a mustache drawn on it? How can you take yourself seriously if you see that all the time?
- Do something silly. Help someone wash their car and end up with spraying each other with water!
- Put on a silly skit for others on your team. Of course, in the skit, poke fun at your own agency—not malicious fun, but humorous fun!
- Share your language goofs!! Thinking they are talking about being embarrassed, Americans learning Spanish often tell people they are pregnant (embarazada). Beware of false cognates.

The more you laugh, the better it is for you! Have fun laughing at yourself.

3

...about Stress

(with Marty Seitz)

From the time they first followed Jesus, Christian workers have faced great stress. Soon after they were called and appointed to ministry, **the disciples** found their ministry to the crowds so pressing that they did not even have time to eat (Mark 3:20). Nearly a year later, the stress was still so great that they still did not have time to eat, and they could not escape the crowds even when they tried (Mark 6:31-33).

Paul, first missionary to the Gentiles, listed some of his stressful situations for us.

- Worked hard, labored, toiled
- Imprisoned repeatedly
- Beaten, lashed, stoned
- Constantly on the move
- Shipwrecked, a night in the sea
- In danger from own countrymen
- Danger in the city, danger in the country
- Danger from “false brothers”
- Went without sleep
- Hungry, thirsty
- Cold, lacked clothing
- Pressure of the concern for the churches
(2 Corinthians 11:23-28)

Reading the book of Acts, you will find that **early Christian workers** faced a variety of stressors.

- Physical disability
- False accusations
- Opposition by local religious leaders
- Lies and criticisms of other believers
- Weather delays halting travel
- Headwinds slowing travel
- Theological differences within the church
- Sharp personal disagreements
- Riots
- Limited financial resources
- Evacuations
- Snakebite
- Legal action against them

What is stress?

Stress is a process involving environmental events (stressors), our own reactions to the stress, and the resources we use to cope with the stress. Think of this like the bills you receive in the mail.

Example 1: You have \$500 in the bank (resources), and you receive 20 bills totaling \$800 due immediately (events), so you panic (high stress reaction). Example 2: You have \$5000 in the bank (resources), but you receive 20 bills totaling \$800 due immediately (events), but you have little concern (low stress reaction). Note that the stress you feel depends both on the events and on your resources. So to cope with the stress, you want either to decrease the stressful events or to increase your resources or both.

Some **stressors** (events) are always present in the background, such as noise, heat, insects, poverty, discrimination, minority status, and you are not even aware of them. Other stressors are the almost daily irritating hassles of life, such as traffic jams, waiting in lines, fender benders, struggling with language in new situations, loneliness, computers down, difficult co-workers, and bureaucracy.

You feel the strain whenever they occur. Still other stressors are major life changes experienced by nearly everyone at some time, such as death of a family member, moving to a new church or field of service, serious illness or accident, and divorce of close friends (or yourself). You struggle with them when they happen. Finally, some Christian workers experience life-threatening stressors, such as assault, tornadoes, deadly diseases, earthquakes, evacuation, or war. The effects of these traumas can be long lasting.

Even **positive things**, such as marriage, the birth of a child, and promotion can be stressful. They require change or adaptation and draw on a person's resources.

How do people react to stress?

Some people react **with physical symptoms**, such as headache, stomachache, diarrhea, and so forth. Others people react with **psychological symptoms** such as anxiety, difficulty concentrating, depression, and so forth. Still others react with **behavioral symptoms** such as driving too fast, picking fights, overeating, going on spending sprees, and so forth. Stress can affect many areas of our lives.

What can I do about stress?

Remember that to cope with the stress, you want either to decrease the stressful events or to increase your resources for coping with the stress or both.

- **Changing the time** you do things may decrease the stressors. Shopping at a different time may decrease the traffic jams, result in fewer lines at the market, and make a fender bender less likely.
- Stress is cumulative, so try to **space out** stressful events rather than clumping them together. For example, if you have to deal with a difficult co-worker, do not schedule the meeting right after a shopping trip that is likely to involve long lines and traffic jams. You may even be able to spread out major life change events. If you are due for a change of assignment this year and you have

just experienced a death of a family member, your church or agency may allow you to wait another year before that change.

- Background stressors may sometimes be decreased with **things at hand**. If noise is constantly draining away your energy, listening to soothing music through a set of headphones may eliminate that source of stress.
- **Anticipating and preparing** for stressful situations serves to inoculate you against the stress reactions. If you are going to change assignments, read about the new assignment and plan how you will fill it. If you are in a situation that may call for an evacuation, develop a plan for knowing the time to evacuate, evacuation routes, and alternative means of evacuation. If kidnapping is likely, take steps to avoid it, and learn how to act when kidnapped.
- **God is our major resource** for coping with stress. Do not neglect reading God's Word because the Holy Spirit often illuminates passages of Scripture relative to the stressful situation you are in. Search the Scripture for what God has already said about your situation.
- **Pray for yourself** in stressful times. Prayers of intercession for others are wonderful, but at times you need prayers of petition for yourself. Christian workers who spend much time in intercession need not feel guilty for petitioning God for their own needs.
- Meditate after you have asked God for direction. **Listen** for the answer. Sometimes the Spirit uses a memorized passage of Scripture, a word from a fellow Christian, or an event that occurs in your life to direct your coping efforts.
- **Ask others to pray** for you. These may range from unspoken requests to detailed explanations. Ask people to commit to pray for you by name during specific days or specific times of great stress.
- Research shows that **social support** is the single most important human means of increasing resources to combat stress. The fellowship of believers in Christ is an invaluable source of strength for the most difficult stresses you face. The positive supportive relationships of Christian community are great

resources, so do not hesitate to draw on them. Ask for help and accept it.

- Use your **problem-solving** skills to help reduce your stress. Read about the stressful area in your life. Talk with others who have experienced the same types of stress. Brainstorm solutions yourself, comb books for ideas, and ask others for possible solutions. Select a potential solution, try it out, and evaluate whether or not it works; then adjust it if necessary or try a new solution. Repeat the process as often as necessary.
- Take time for a **healthy diversion**. You may need time to cool off a while or recharge before trying to cope any more. You may need a time to rest in addition to your Sabbath each week. Spend some time on reading, listening to music, enjoying a hobby, playing a favorite sport, or doing other things that you enjoy.
- On the other hand, **don't procrastinate**. Procrastinating can also cause increased stress, so set reasonable deadlines for yourself to complete your personal and professional responsibilities.
- Get some **exercise**. God gave us reactions to stress that prepare us for flight or fight. Running, swimming, walking rapidly, or playing active sports are analogous to flight. Throwing or hitting balls with your hands or with bats or paddles are analogous to fighting. Both disperse the biochemical buildup that prepares us to cope with stress. Fresh air and sunshine (but not heat) are also usually helpful.
- Take time for adequate **rest and relaxation**. Remember that God made the Sabbath for us as humans, and be sure you take that day of rest, relaxation, and restoration each week, whether it is on Sunday or another day of the week.
- **Sleep** is a major coping resource for dealing with stress. Take time to sleep, and if you are having difficulty sleeping, learn about ways to get better sleep—see our brochure in this series.
- Monitor your self-talk. Be sure you have **helpful thoughts** so that you are an encouraging “coach” to yourself. A mean, cruel, discouraging coach may say something like, “That is really a dumb idea. It'll never work. There's no point even trying it.” A

caring, hopeful, encouraging coach would say, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”

- Pour out your soul. **Express your thoughts and/or feelings** in any of several ways. These include journaling, writing letters to friends, praying, composing poems or songs, singing songs or reading Psalms that reflect your thoughts or feelings, creating art, and sharing with another person. God created us to communicate with others and to express our thoughts and feelings. This provides a healthy release and may help us understand ourselves better as well as help others understand us.
- Use **relaxation techniques** of stretching and/or breathing, and/or imagining one of your favorite places as described in our anxiety brochure.
- Learn how to appropriately say, “**No**,” to reduce lower priority demands on your time. God's people can appropriately refuse the requests of others. At times Jesus himself dismissed the crowd and went off by himself to pray, and he even often withdrew for prayer when people came to hear and be healed (Matthew 14:22-23, Luke 5:15-16). He chose to say, “No,” to one kind of request to meet a higher priority.
- **Delegate** some of the responsibility to someone else, such as Jesus did when he sent out the disciples (Matthew 10).
- **Ask** for what you need from others. Jesus told his followers to ask, seek, and knock to get things they needed (Matthew 7). Asking for help from others may be a blessing to them. Sacrifices on their part may be spiritually helpful to them.
- **Read good books** on stress management, such as *Relaxation and Stress Reduction Workbook* by Martha Davis, Matthew McKay, and Elizabeth Eschelman. Read good books on managing your time such as *Organize Yourself* by Ronni Eisenberg.
- You may want to explore the **Internet** for further suggestions

4

...about Time-Oriented Cultures (Time Management)

(with Marty Seitz)

Since the time of Jesus, those who work for him have found themselves very busy and have needed to manage their time. As revealed in the book of Mark, Jesus himself seemed to be in control of his time. In the dark of early morning after a busy evening Jesus rose early, left the house and went off by himself to pray. When his disciples found him and told him that everyone was looking for him, he said, “Let’s go somewhere else...” (Mark 1:35-38). He said no to some people to make time for others.

Later the crowds surrounded Jesus and his disciples and kept them so busy that they were not even able to eat. When Jesus’ family heard about the tremendous time pressure on him, they came to take charge, but they could not reach him either, so they sent someone in to call him out. That time he stayed where he was teaching even when they told him that his family was there for him (Mark 3:29-33). He did not stop teaching just because his family came.

Still later after his disciples had been called, instructed, commissioned, sent out on an evangelistic crusade, and returned, there were so many people around that they again did not have time to eat. Again Jesus asked them to come to a quiet place with him and get some rest. They went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place (Mark 6:7-32). All these examples demonstrate that Jesus took control of his time.

To this day missionaries, pastors, and other Christian workers find themselves besieged by people with problems. If these Christian workers are not able to take control of their time, they will soon find themselves burning out, thus being of little use for the work of the kingdom of God.

Following is a collection of time management tips grouped into several categories.

Get Started (procrastination)

People have different reasons for their procrastination, so different strategies may be needed to counteract these different causes. For example, a person who procrastinates because of feeling overwhelmed would need a different strategy from one who does so because of getting a “rush” from hurrying around just to get the job done on time. A person who procrastinates because of perfectionistic tendencies would need a different strategy from one who does so to avoid responsibility. The following strategies may help you get started.

- Break a seemingly impossible large task into smaller sections. Then plan and schedule times to tackle these more manageable sections.
- Start with the most difficult part first if you are the kind of the person who likes to get the worst out of the way first.
- Start with the easiest part first if you are the kind of person who needs the reward of completing some part to encourage you to go on to the next step.
- Reward yourself each time you complete a part of the task, no matter how small.
- Go on to another part of the task when you get stuck on one part. Come back to complete the one you were stuck on after you have had some time to think it over.
- Take advantage of unexpected opportunities. When an appointment is cancelled, do something else that needs to be done.

- Do nothing. Just sit with the project for fifteen minutes and look at it. That may motivate you to get going or allow a plan to begin to develop in your mind.
- Change nothing. You have survived so far with your procrastination, and starting at the last minute may just be your style if you consistently finish on time in the end.
- Decide beforehand how well the task needs to be done. For some people cleaning the cabin means sweeping the floor. For others it means sweeping and mopping the floor. For still others it means removing the cobwebs from the crawl space beneath the floor as well.
- Work with a partner, a non-procrastinating one. Give that partner permission to prod you on without your resenting it. Let their strength compensate for your weakness.

Get There (out of the house on time)

Some people get started on the task but have difficulty getting where they are going. The following strategies may help you get out of the house on time.

- Prepare ahead of time. At the latest be ready the night before.
- Make a list of the things you need to do, including a realistic time estimate for each task that needs to be done. Then add up all the times to make sure you leave enough to complete the task.
- Set an alarm for 10-15 minutes before you have to leave to give you warning to do last minute things.
- Have a particular place you keep things (like keys, books, folders) that you will need to take with you when you leave so that you do not have to spend time looking for them when you are ready to walk out of the house.

Keep Going (interruptions)

Once you have started, you may find it difficult to keep going because of interruptions. The following tips often work in a time-oriented culture.

- Publish and/or post your open-door office hours; then keep them faithfully. People will learn to respect them if they can reliably find you there for open-door time.
- Use “DO NOT DISTURB” signs, and even lock your door. People expect you to be involved in counseling and other situations where you should not be interrupted.
- Group interruptions. If someone is coming to fix your telephone, try to schedule the copier repair and the plumber at the same time.
- Go to a different place where you are unavailable because no one knows where to find you. Jesus frequently went off by himself or with his disciples.
- Use e-mail to conduct routine “business,” and turn off the announcement on your computer that says, “You have mail.”
- Have a professional evaluate you for ADD/ADHD if interruptions distract you more than they seem to distract others.
- Have an agenda for every meeting, and direct interruptions to the “new business” section of the meeting.
- Although it may seem artificial at first, conduct your meetings using *Robert’s Rules of Order* so that you can deflect interruptions without people taking it personally.

Keep Going (telephone calls)

Although the telephone can be a time saver, it can also be an interrupter as well. These tips can minimize those interruptions.

- Have someone else answer the phone for you.
- Use the phone to call ahead to make sure others are expecting you for appointments.
- Use answering machines.
 - Leave messages for others on their answering machines.
 - Use your answering machine to screen your calls before answering.
 - Get an answering machine that allows people to leave long messages if they want to get a message across to you without calling back. (This may be problem for youth pastors whose

middle schoolers delight in playing tapes to them over the phone—and they have to listen to the whole tape to make sure there are not other important messages.)

- Establish a “telephone time,” like you have “office hours,” when you will be available to talk on the phone.
- When you answer the phone say, “I only have ____ minutes to talk.”
- When the conversation has gone about as far as it needs to, say, “Before I hang up...”
- Set a timer to go off so that the person on the other end can hear it and say, “I’ve got to go.”
- Purchase a phone with portable headphones so that you have both hands free to do other things while talking on the phone.
- Remove your phone from the jack or turn off the ringer if you do not want to be disturbed.

Use a Timer (or clock)

In a time-oriented society, we must certainly talk about using our time technology.

- Have a clock in every room so that everyone can potentially be aware of the time.
- Set an alarm for the end of the estimated time for completing a task. It will remind you that you are taking longer than expected.
- Set the alarm, and play “beat the clock” to see if you can get the task done before the alarm goes off.
- Set multiple alarms of a watch timer at 15-minute (or other times) intervals so that you will be reminded continually of the passage of time.
- Set the alarm to signal that it is time to move on to the next task.

Leave (when you are done)

When you have completed your task, it is all right to leave. Remember that Jesus himself at times said “goodbye” and left. He got away by himself and spent time alone with the Father.

Miscellaneous tips

- Delegate tasks to others. Jethro urged Moses to delegate some of his responsibilities to others (Exodus 18). Jesus sent his disciples out to preach and heal (Mark 6, Luke 9). The Twelve delegated responsibility to seven more (Acts 6).
- Always carry something with you to do. You may get caught in traffic; someone may be delayed for an appointment with you, and so forth.
- Ask people to pray for you related to your use of time.
- Have an accountability partner hold you responsible for your use of time.
- Get help from someone who is naturally gifted at planning and organizing.
- Learn how to multitask; do several things at once.
- Save time by organizing things other than time.
 - Develop an organizational system for paper (mail, books, files, etc.).
 - Order your financial records and budget.
 - Organize your physical space so you do not waste time looking for things.

Good stewardship of time involves budgeting time, just as you would money. Everyone has exactly the same amount of time each day, therefore, you have to decide how much total time you have available and what percent of it you will spend on each priority.

5

...about Expectations

You have been working on a project for six months, already twice as long as you thought it would take, and you are discouraged that it is going nowhere. Perhaps you expected help from your field director and you feel like all you got was criticism. Perhaps you are field director, and you are discouraged that the other missionaries did not really get behind your proposal. Perhaps after being asked to take a position in your home office, you were surprised to find that you feel like you are accomplishing little of real importance. All of these situations have unfulfilled expectations in common. 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.

I'm too old to have unrealistic expectations!

Impossible again! As long as you are alive, your expectations may be unrealistic. Such expectations are most obvious and most common among the idealistic first-term missionaries who have such high hopes and great visions of how God will use them. However, they may occur at any stage of a missionary's life.

- First furlough. You thought people back home would be eager to hear about the revival that is happening on your field. However, after listening politely for about five minutes, they excitedly begin telling you about the success of the local basketball team.
- Become field director. You had such great plans for the field, but both the national church and the other missionaries are much more interested in promoting their own projects. You have not been able to bring unity to the field.
- You move to the home office. You had thought the stress would be more bearable back in your own culture, but living back "home" is even worse.
- Retirement. If you are still active, you have some expectations about what retirement will be like—and you may be eagerly anticipating it, or dreading it. If you are retired, you may feel like you have been put on the shelf. Or you may feel like the mission expects too much volunteer work from you.

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 the 1960s the director of Missionary Internship suggested six attainable objectives for the first term. They were:

1. Learn the language.
2. Adjust to the field.
3. Learn about the mission.
4. Understand the field.
5. Find your gifts and place in the work.
6. Confirm your missionary call.

This 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.

6

...about Contentment

Amy and her husband had served three years and had a fruitful ministry. However, they returned home sooner than they expected because of relationship stresses on the field and a new baby. They realized that they would not be returning to the field and wrote asking for help with two things, “reestablishing relationships at home” and “being content with where they are.”

Sam had served ten years on the same field, was liked by everyone, was very talented, had a successful ministry in a village, and had been promoted to being field director. Although he had never sought that “promotion,” agency leaders back home pointed out that he was the person best qualified. Sam and his wife both agreed that no one else was better, but he was going through a “season of discontent.”

Amy did not have contentment because she was not serving on that field, and Sam did not have contentment because he was serving on that field in a “higher” position. Contentment is not a matter of external circumstances, but a matter of how missionaries interpret those circumstances.

What is contentment?

Dictionaries have two definitions of contentment.

- One of definition is: Happy enough with what one has or is; not desiring more or different; satisfied serving God; deep joy within oneself or gratitude to God.
- The other definition is usually: Willingness; willing to go along or accept; or bearing their “cross.”
A thesaurus usually gives two sets of synonyms.
- The first list of synonyms includes such things as: rest satisfied, let well enough alone, feel oneself at home, serenity, gratifying, peace of mind, ease of mind, ease, pleasure, or happiness.
- The second list of synonyms includes such things as: put up with it, get over it, resigned to, barely tolerable, bearable, grudgingly acceptable, or adequate.

All of these definitions and synonyms indicate that people will be able to function in their circumstances, but the connotations of the first and second sets are quite different.

What does the Bible say about contentment?

Paul, an early missionary, wrote a supporting church that he had learned to be content whatever the circumstances. He knew what it meant to have plenty as well as to be in need, and he had learned the secret of being content in any and every situation—even when hungry or in want (Philippians 4:11-12). Note that this was something he learned, not something that came naturally, and that learned ability applied to whatever happened.

Paul also wrote to a young missionary pastoring a church he had planted during a stay of several years in Ephesus. Paul told Timothy, “Godliness with contentment is great gain.” He went on to say that if we have only food and clothing we can be content with that (1 Timothy 6:6-8). The only other place that word for “contentment” is used in the Bible is where Paul wrote to another church he planted. Such contentment is the “having all you need” in the following passage: “in all things at all times having all you need you will abound in every good work” (2 Corinthians 9:8). That is contentment, and it refers primarily to the first definitions or

synonyms of contentment in the previous section—things leading to peace and joy!

What prevents or destroys that contentment?

Paul said we can learn to be content when our basic needs, such as food and clothing, are met. The problem arises when our “wants” are not filled. Many people want more than the necessities of life. They want something bigger, better, newer, faster, more prestigious or more expensive. The most common source of these wants is comparison which often leads to envy.

Jesus told a parable about envious comparison destroying contentment. A landowner agreed to pay workers a denarius (a typical day’s wage) for a day’s work. Apparently they were satisfied with that because they started to work. Throughout the day more workers came to work. In the evening when the workers were paid, all of them received a denarius. Those who had agreed to work all day for a denarius were no longer contented when they compared their wages with the others (Matthew 20:1-16). When they objected, the landowner asked them if they were envious because of his generosity.

Later, when Jesus told Peter about his future, Peter looked at another disciple and said, “Lord, what about him?” Jesus told Peter that was not any of his business; he was just to follow Jesus—not compare his future with anyone else’s (John 21:16-22).

Envious people do not even really love themselves. They are not grateful for, or happy in, what they are or what they have. This sin is deadly because it will not let people live as themselves, grateful for the qualities and talents that God has given them, and making the best and most rewarding use of those gifts. Their degradation of others is a reflection of their degradation of themselves and their gifts. These people wind up alienated from themselves as well as others and “miss the party” like the elder brother of the prodigal son in Luke 15.

Jesus, in his parable about the workers in the vineyard, made it clear that a common result of comparison is envy. Envy can never result in gratification—no enjoyment, only endless self-torment as its

appetite increases. Envy is not merely wanting another’s goods but wanting to pull the other person down. This leads to resentment, backbiting, spite, slander, hatred, and even murder, as was the case with Cain and Abel (Genesis 4:2-8).

How do people get that contentment?

People can choose the level of contentment they have. Some people choose just to live in discontent, never satisfied or happy with their situation and not accepting and going along with things. Others decide to live with the second definition of contentment, tolerating things and going along grudgingly. Still others decide to take action to get the first definition so that they are satisfied with deep joy and gratitude in all circumstances.

Whenever people notice differences between themselves and others, they may begin making comparisons, and those comparisons often lead to envy. Since few people escape feelings of envy, what can they do when the Spirit makes them aware of their envy? What can they do to avoid falling into this trap?

- Start looking up. As with any other sin, they are to confess it, and God has promised to forgive (1 John 1). If they deny their sin, they deceive themselves and remain in it. When they are forgiven, they are to repent, not only to feel sorrow for the wrong they have done but also to turn from the sin itself.
- Look at themselves. If they must make comparisons, compare themselves with themselves. Galatians 6:4 states, “Each man should examine his own conduct for himself; then he can measure his achievement by comparing himself with himself and not with anyone else.” Compare their apartment, salary, vehicle, and so forth now with what they had 10 or 20 years ago, not with missionary colleagues they now have.
- Count their blessings. Rather than comparing themselves with missionaries who have more, compare themselves with people they serve who have less. Compare their apartment with the living conditions of the homeless. Compare their salary with the unemployed and nationals they serve. Compare their vehicles

with those who have no vehicle at all. Just as comparing themselves with those who are better off creates envy, so comparing themselves with those less well-off increases contentment. In fact, as they “count their blessings,” they may be motivated to share them with others who have less. Such sharing will increase their satisfaction even more!

- Accept that nothing (no thing) brings lasting joy and contentment. No matter what they have, they may soon adapt to it and want something “better,” whether it is housing, spouse, salary, vehicle, position, language ability, and so forth. Research in the late 20th century showed that relationships, not things, were most highly correlated with happiness.

Romans 12:1 urges people to offer themselves as living sacrifices as an act of service. This is pleasing to God and results in contentment for the missionary. Doing so usually involves two parts. First, they need to make an open-ended general surrender to God of everything that is to come up in the future. Second, as unexpected specific things appear after that, the missionary may have to update and revise that surrender to include the attractive new things.

Although missionaries cannot find joy, satisfaction, and contentment by pursuing these things, contentment may find them as they are careful about comparisons, avoid envy, and keep the Great Commandment to love God and to love others as they love themselves.

What are the results of contentment?

Though it may seem impossible, God’s people are able to have contentment in the most difficult circumstances. Here are some examples in the Bible.

- Rejoicing even when expectations are not met (Habakkuk 3:17-18)
- Rejoicing when persecuted (Acts 5:41)
- Singing hymns to God even when flogged and thrown into jail (Acts 16:23-25)
- Joyfully accepting property being confiscated (Hebrews 10:34)

- Rejoicing when suffering for Christ (1 Peter 4:12-13)

7

...about Dissatisfaction

Bill and Bev had completed their first four-year term on the field, and they were rather dissatisfied. As they talked together, they realized that neither of them had much satisfaction from serving as missionaries. They were still in love, but they were both disappointed with the way their marriage was going. They both loved their children dearly, but they were not nearly as excited about being parents as they were before they became missionaries. In fact, they had less interest in missions than they had before they served as missionaries.

They tried to think of why this had happened. Had they mistaken God's call? Should they change fields or agencies? Should they just stay "home" and become attrition statistics? They finally decided to see what the Bible had to say about dissatisfaction and satisfaction.

What does the Bible say?

To their surprise the word "dissatisfaction" did not even occur in the Bible, at least not in the translations they had. They found many passages about satisfaction, but most of them were in the Old Testament. Some of the verses were relevant, especially those in Psalms and Proverbs.

Again to their surprise, the New Testament had very few references about being satisfied, and most of those were about eating until one was satisfied. That was little help for their confusion about their own general dissatisfaction, and they began to wonder.

What has missionary research found?

People have done little research on dissatisfaction in missionaries, and what has been done has been related to marriage rather than to their general satisfaction. However, two good studies have been done.

First, Christopher Rosik and Jelna Pandzic wondered about changes in marital satisfaction over a couple's years of service as missionaries. They predicted that satisfaction would decrease during the first few years of missionary service, and then it would increase as the couple adjusted to the new culture.

Between 1982 and 2003 they asked 28 couples to complete the Marital Satisfaction Inventory (MSI) three times: (1) during candidacy, (2) at the end of their first four-year term, and (3) at the end of their second four-year term. The missionaries ranged from 23 to 42 years of age at the beginning, and they had been married from 1 to 16 years.

As Rosik and Pandzic expected, they found that satisfaction decreased during the first term of service; however, it did not increase during their second term of service. Age and number of children made no difference; missionaries in their 20s, 30s and 40s all became more dissatisfied with their marriages during their first term of service, and they did not become more satisfied during their second. ("Marital satisfaction among Christian missionaries: A Longitudinal analysis from candidacy to second furlough". *Journal of Psychology and Christianity*, 2008, Vol. 27, pp. 3-15.)

Second, Stephen Sweatman also studied missionaries during their first term of service. He looked at the relationship between marital satisfaction and psychological symptoms. He also used the MSI to measure satisfaction. In addition he used measures of anxiety and depression. He asked 34 couples to complete the inventories, and he found a significant correlation between depression and marital satisfaction, the greater the depression the higher the dissatisfaction ("Marital satisfaction, cross-cultural adjustment stress, and the psychological sequelae" *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, 1999, Vol. 27, pp. 154-162).

These two studies found that the level of marital satisfaction could be related to other variables, such as years of service and depression. Because both of these studies were conducted on missionaries and concentrated only on marital satisfaction, other questions rise. Do non-missionaries find similar declines in satisfaction? Do these changes in marital satisfaction also indicate similar changes in life satisfaction?

What has secular research found?

Fortunately, these questions have been answered by other research. Boyd Rollins and Herald Feldman studied marital satisfaction over the family life cycle in the 1960s. Rather than using the age of people, 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, research on 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. 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.

To borrow the first few words from the opening lines of Shakespeare’s *Richard III*, there seems to be a “winter of discontent” in the middle of life, a period when people experience far less life satisfaction.

What are the implications?

Missionaries often experience less and less satisfaction with their lives as they serve in other cultures, and they may conclude that the problem is unique to them or a result of their missionary service. Of course, some of that decline in satisfaction may be theirs alone, but they must remember that many people experience that increasing dissatisfaction from their early twenties before they had many children until their mid-fifties when their last children leave home. They should not blame God or give up on missionary service. If they recognize that at least part of that decline is common to most people, they are less likely to become discouraged and quit. It is much better to “bloom where they are planted” rather than spend those difficult years moping around and doing little of the Lord’s work.

Is there any hope for satisfaction?

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.”

Furthermore, most people find little dissatisfaction with retirement. During stage 8 about 70% of people find retirement to be “very satisfying,” back up to the level it was when they were in their 20s.

Robert Browning expressed it well in Rabbi Ben Ezra:

Grow old along with me!
The best is yet to be,
The last of life, for which the first was made:
Our times are in His hand
Who saith "A whole I planned,
Youth shows but half; trust God: see all, nor be afraid!"

8**...about Attrition**

Sam and Vonda finally had all they could take. Vonda got diarrhea time after time, and Sam was so discouraged that he thought he might be clinically depressed. Their home church had a new pastor who had never met them, and he had persuaded the missions committee to cut their support in half.

They had a great idea for attracting people through teaching high-tech meditation, but both the field director and people at headquarters refused to let them use it. The field director always seemed to be critical of what they did and seldom encouraged them in any way. Other missionaries in their agency seemed to reject them as well, so they were lonely and their frustration was turning into anger.

After nine months of their two-year commitment, they purchased their plane tickets home on their own, packed up, and asked their parents to meet them at the airport.

Events like this have become too common. People spend months or years preparing to serve as missionaries. They raise many thousands of dollars to serve. Then they leave their place of service in a few months broken and discouraged. The missionary attrition problem became so serious by the end of the twentieth century that major studies of it were conducted.

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 ReMAP received surveys from 551 missionaries from 14 sending countries. In 1997 the results were published 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 why missionaries they knew had left their agency 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 offspring were unable to adapt to a 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 passport country.
- Problems with peers: they had relationship problems with mission field leaders 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 includes 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 suggested such things as cross-cultural and language training before going.
- On-field training and supervision: These chapters included what needed to be done shortly after the recruits arrived on the field, and who would support them and 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 missionaries lost only about 6% of their missionaries each year, but smaller agencies lost missionaries at the alarming rate of 33%.

Do other Christian workers also quit?

One interesting question to ask is whether the attrition problem is found only among missionaries or whether it is also found in Christian workers remaining in their passport countries. It may be that such attrition is found among all Christian workers. However, if it is found only in missionaries, it would mean that working cross-culturally is the problem.

During the last decade of the 20th century, about the same time ReMAP was conducted, the Center for Social and Religious Research at Hartford Seminary received a grant from the Lilly Endowment to study the status of ordained women in Protestantism in the USA. The researchers surveyed thousands of pastors, both male and female, in 16 denominations. They received responses from 2668 women and 2170 men with an overall response rate of 49%. The results were published in 1998 as a book written by Barbara Zikmund, Adair Lummis and Patricia Mei Yin Chang and titled *Clergy Women: An Uphill Calling*. They found that, during the previous year, 25% of the

men and 26% of the women had considered leaving church-recognized ministry or actually did leave.

About the same time ReMAP II began, the Duke University Divinity School began a study supported by the Lilly Endowment, a study about pastoral attrition. This research resulted in 9662 surveys from pastors who had left five denominations in the USA. Written by Dean Hoge and Jacqueline Wenger and titled *Pastors in Transition: Why Clergy Leave the Local Church Ministry*. The results were published in 2005.

This study also found that pastors were leaving their work in the USA as well. Although few good statistics exist relative to the percent leaving, the best study Hoge and Wenger found reported that 41.5% leave by the end of the first 10 years. 68.0% leave by the end of 20 years.

Why do other Christian workers quit?

In *Clergy Women: An Uphill Calling* (same time as ReMAP) Zikmund, Lummis, and Chang found the following factors influencing clergy seriously considering leaving the ministry.

- Weak professional self-concept
- Not paid enough for ministerial work
- Not part of a clergy support group
- Feel the denominational executive does not recognize their abilities.

Chapters 3-9 in *Pastors in Transition* (same time frame as ReMAP II) appear in a section titled “Seven Main Motivations” as to why pastors left their ministry. Here are the reasons they left. Note how similar they are to the ones missionaries had reported.

- Preferred another kind of ministry
- Needed to care for children or family
- Had conflict in the congregation
- Had conflict with denominational leaders
- Were burned out or discouraged
- Left due to sexual misconduct

- Left due to divorce or marital problems

What can missionaries do?

Mission agencies have done much toward lowering attrition during the last two decades. That is good, but it is not the whole solution to the problem. The other part of the solution is up to the missionaries themselves.

Probably the best thing missionaries can do is to join an agency that has at least 50 missionaries serving in other cultures. Some agencies may say that they have 100 missionaries, but they count everyone who works in any way for the agency as a missionary. Of course, in one sense they are, but unless the agency has at least 50 people serving in other cultures, it is not likely to have the infrastructure to care for their missionaries. If the agency has 75 people at “home,” but only 25 in different cultures, it is not likely to have what is needed to prevent attrition.

This has been my own experience in serving missionaries. Though we have heard occasional “horror” stories from people in large agencies, we hear these stories far more frequently from missionaries in small agencies. And we find them even more frequently while serving missionaries who have gone out with only their local church as their support when they are overseas. The worst of all is when people form their own group with a few friends and go out with no established support group at home.

When choosing an agency it is best for missionaries to ask what that agency has in place to help missionaries in such situations. Does the agency do the five major things agencies began doing following ReMAP? Does it have resources in place to help people facing the seven major reasons ReMAP found for quitting?

After joining an agency, missionaries should take full advantage of all the training, orientation, and supervision available. Those who avoid these are most likely to be the ones who become attrition statistics. Those programs have been put in place to prevent attrition.

Although the idea came up on the sections about pastors, it is important for every missionary to have some kind of support group with whom they can share the most intimate things. Everyone needs someone to talk with. It is best if that person is physically present, but if that is impossible, Skyping or talking on the phone is better than nothing. It is best if such contact occurs on a regular basis, preferably weekly.

To be forewarned is to be forearmed. That is, missionaries who find themselves in situations where they are experiencing the reasons missionaries and pastors quit can take steps to get out of the situation.

9

...about Saying Goodbye

One missionary said, “I am tired of making friendships and then moving all over; to me it is not worth the effort. On furlough I know I know I am leaving, so why try?”

Another said, “I don’t know how to deal with the changes that surround the arrival and departure of staff members on the field. Especially with short-termers coming and going, it seems like we are always expanding and contracting to include so many different people on our team.... How do we love deeply yet hold lightly?”

Still another said, “I find it hard to have to say goodbye all the time. People I become friends with leave our part of the field, and I have to stay behind. How do I cope with that other than to quit building relationships?”

When you became a missionary you probably thought about saying goodbye to your family and friends in your passport country and then leaving. However, you may have never considered how difficult other goodbyes would be. Is this a new problem? Is it getting worse? How can you cope with it? Let us consider these issues.

Is this a new problem?

No, this problem has been around as long as missionaries have. A look at Paul and his relationships with the people of Ephesus shows us some of the problems with saying goodbye.

Paul was apparently in Ephesus only a short time near the end of this 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. 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 coworkers is nothing new for missionaries.

Is it getting worse?

It is probably no more difficult to for each individual, but it may well be that people have to say goodbye more often than they did in Paul's day. Changes in the last half of the twentieth century have made short-term missions to any part of the world a reality. Before the advent of reasonably priced air travel since 1950, just reaching many mission fields often took several weeks crossing the ocean by ship. Today people can be on any mission field in the world in a matter of hours, a couple days at the most.

One type of short-term mission very popular now is one where a group spends a week or two on a mission field to teach a Bible school, help construct a building, or do routine maintenance work. Though this has helped expose millions of people to missions first-

hand, it means many hellos followed by many goodbyes a week or two later. Thus the long-term missionaries never have a chance to develop relationships with them. Relationships take time.

Another type of short-term mission increasing in recent years is one where a person comes to a field for several months or a year or two to help out generally, or to complete a particular project. These people have no intention of staying long-term and are most common among people born since the mid 1960s. In this case there is time to develop a relationship, but the missionaries on the field may be reluctant to do so knowing that the short-term person will soon be gone. Saying goodbye to someone you know only superficially is easier.

Does this affect everyone?

Yes, it affects everyone, but it affects people differently. Some people seem to have little need for deep relationships and are content to keep relationships at more of a surface level, so saying goodbye has relatively little effect on them. Other people have a greater desire to share intimately with a larger group of friends, and saying goodbye affects them, very deeply.

Women tend to be more relationship oriented than are men. Therefore, they may be more affected by leaving their friends or having their friends move away. Unfortunately, their husbands are sometimes not sensitive to this difference between themselves and their wives.

Of course, such mobility is common in developed countries. In the United States about one person in six moves every year, so even the person who does not move says goodbye often. When our oldest son was in first grade, there were five boys in first grade on our street. By the time he was in sixth grade, he was the only one left. Of course, a move within a country may be within the same area, rather than half way around the world, but it still affects relationships.

Do we just quit building deep relationships?

Some people try to cope by simply becoming detached or “hardened.” By not getting deeply involved with their fellow missionaries they decrease the pain of having to say goodbye. This coping mechanism may reduce the pain of goodbyes; but the person becoming detached, the person who is “rejected,” and the gospel message are all harmed by this.

Jesus commanded us to love each other as he loved us. Loving and being loved are important to both our mental and physical health. When deep relationships are avoided, both parties lose a part of their potential support system. In addition, Jesus pointed out that this was how others would know that we are his disciples. Thus, by not developing these relationships, we make it less likely that people will see Jesus in us (John 13:34-35).

How do we love deeply yet hold lightly?

Since saying goodbye is a normal part of life, especially missionary life, we can take steps to minimize the pain.

- Change your perspective. Rather than concentrating on the negative aspects of anticipating parting, it is better to concentrate on the positive aspects of the current relationship. As someone said, it is better to have loved and lost than to never have loved at all.
- Look for people who “click.” When you find people with the same values, same aspirations, same commitment, etc., become close friends even if it seems there is no “future” in the friendship. One couple we met more than a decade ago when visiting a field are still good friends. We have become one of their supporters, visited them on the field again, made contact at conferences, had them in our home while on home assignment. We have spent hours talking and sharing deeply.
- Become intimate sooner. Third culture kids of all types (missionary, military, etc.) become experts at this. When they meet each other and realize their common background, they begin

to share at a deeper level much sooner than those raised in a single culture. With practice, anyone can develop this capacity.

- Communicate while apart. This has always been possible, but is much easier with the invention on e-mail in recent years. However, e-mail is a mixed blessing.
- On the positive side, friendships can be continued at virtually no financial cost even when people are far apart. (In fact, relationships can be initiated without ever meeting personally, and that may become a problem.)
- On the negative side, some people become so busy keeping old friendships alive that they fail to make new ones. Some missionaries communicate via e-mail daily with old friends, but spend little time with the people living near them currently. Thus, they fail to continue to make new friends.
- Grieve your losses. It is all right (even necessary) to do all the things Paul and the elders from Ephesus did:
 - Wept
 - Embraced
 - Kissed
 - Tore away
- Pick up where you leave off. After you become good friends, you can pick up your friendship where it was when you parted. You still have the same values, aspirations, concerns, etc., so all you need to do is get an update on what you have been doing, and your relationship continues from there.
- Remember that relationships give hope. At creation God built parting into the family. When a young man and young woman grow up, they leave their father and mother and cleave to each other (Genesis 2). Most people do not refuse to have children because their children mature and leave, they look forward to reuniting with their children both here on earth and in heaven. We also look forward to reuniting with other loved ones in heaven.

10

...about Those Who Stay

Imagine the following situation. Carlos and Maria have completed their term of service and are going “home” for at least a year. Their children, Jose and Susi, are reluctantly going with them.

At the airport, Peter and Martha along with their two children, Billy and Betsy, have just told them goodbye and now their whole family is in the car headed back to their home. All four of them are lost in their own thoughts.

- Peter has mixed feelings. Carlos was an effective field director, but he expected everyone to be a workaholic like he was, so the pressure will be off. Unfortunately, Pete now has to serve as field director even though he dislikes administration, and it means he will not be able to spend much time on his ministry to street kids.
- Martha is happy. She majored in accounting but has not had a chance to do much of it because Maria was field treasurer. Now Martha will be able to use her skills.
- Billy is sad. Jose was his best friend, and now he will be almost the only boy there.
- Betsy is relieved. Susi teased her and made fun of her much of the time, and now Susie will not be around to do that.

People usually think about the effect of goodbyes on the people who are leaving. However, such goodbyes also have a variety of effects on those who remain. Some effects are positive, but others are negative. This brochure is about the negative effects on those who stay.

What does the Bible say about those who stay?

Acts 20 and 21 describe several goodbyes, and three of them report the effects on those who stayed. Here is what happened to those who stayed when Paul said goodbye to the leaders of the church at Ephesus (Acts 20:36-38).

- They all wept.
- They embraced him.
- They kissed him goodbye.
- They grieved because he had told them they would never see his face again.
- They escorted him to the ship.

Later Paul spent a week with disciples in Syria, and here is what happened as he said goodbye to those who stayed (Acts 21:4-6).

- They urged Paul not to go on.
- The disciples, their wives, and their children escorted Paul out of the city.
- They all knelt on the beach to pray.
- They said their goodbyes and returned home.

Still later Paul spent a number of days with Phillip and his family in Caesarea. When Paul was about to leave, here is what the people staying there did (Acts 21:12-14).

- They pleaded with Paul not to go on.
- They wept and broke Paul’s heart.
- They finally gave up and said, “The Lord’s will be done.”

Note that parting was very difficult for those who stayed. They asked Paul not to leave, and often wept as he left. Parting was certainly not easy for those who remained in the Bible, and it is often not easy today.

Who stays?

Of course, many people stay when missionaries leave, but here are some of the most common ones that have to stay.

- Family members at “home.” Retired missionaries may have difficulty when their TCK children and grandchildren leave to serve in another culture.
- Colleagues at “home.” Missionaries serving at headquarters may find it hard watching friends leave for service in other countries.
- Colleagues in host country. Missionaries who have to stay when others transfer to another part of the country, another field, or leave for their home ministry assignment.

Children may react differently to being “left behind” than adults do. Adults usually understand why others leave, but young TCKs may react negatively when their best friends are suddenly taken from them. If adults explain it by saying that God has called the other family to another place, the children may blame God for it.

Parents need to remember that nearly half a century ago Elizabeth Kubler-Ross found that those, including children, who experience grief may deny the loss, become angry about it, try bargaining to prevent it, or become depressed before they accept it. These are all normal reactions to loss.

What happens to those who stay?

Whenever a missionary on the field leaves, a new system or structure will emerge. If the departing missionary was the leader who represented the agency in the country, someone else will have to take that place. If that person was responsible for finances, someone will have to become treasurer.

Even if the departing missionaries did not hold “official” positions, they held positions in the social structure of the field. This means that remaining people will find themselves in new roles even if they would rather not assume those roles.

- Some may find themselves “promoted” to administrative positions even if they do not want to be leaders.
- Others may find themselves assigned positions they are not “qualified” for, such as being treasurer when they have no financial training.

- If the person who left was a bubbly extrovert who loved to plan parties, which of the remaining people (all introverts) will play that role?
- If the agency wants to continue the ministry the departing missionary originated, and everyone else has their own ministry, who will take on that new ministry?
The list can go on and on.

What are the effects on those who stay?

Those who stay may be delighted to see a workaholic field director gone or they may have feelings of loss and grief when an encouraging one leaves. The range of negative emotions may range from minor disappointment to major depression.

- Disappointment because friends are leaving.
- Loneliness from missing friendly faces.
- Betrayal because friends left though they had said they would stay.
- Anger that they are abandoned by friends.
- Anxiety because those left do not know what to do.
- Grief because of the great loss of their leaving.
- Depression from unresolved grief.

All of these can lead to a very difficult time on the field.

What can be done by those who stay?

Those left behind need to realize that they are going through a transition very much like those who go. They are entering a different situation but not moving to a different place. A good beginning is to build a RAFT like those who leave often do.

- Reconciliation. Resolve any hard feelings between them and those who are leaving
- Affirmation. Tell those who are leaving how much they are appreciated.
- Farewells. Say goodbyes to those who are leaving.

- Think Future. Begin to make plans for what must be done right where they are.

As those who stay build their RAFT, they need to remember that they want to accomplish two things: First, they want to create a way that they can keep in touch with those who are leaving. Second, they want to build a new life with others who remain. In this digital age developing a way to keep in touch is relatively simple.

- Exchange email addresses with everyone as you bid them farewell. Everyone probably already has these, but make sure.
- “Friend” those who are most important on Facebook or some other social network. That way those who stay and those who leave can post information about themselves and keep up with each other.
- Exchange Skype names with closest friends too so that they can converse “face-to-face” in the future.

As they develop these ways of communicating, both those who stay and those who go must remember that many of these relationships will become more distant as they all build new lives with those present in the near future.

Second, as they think about their new life with others who remain and new people who come, they begin to develop other relationships. Consider the following items.

- Others who also stayed have many of the same losses and are looking for new friends. Social situations change, so people they already know may become friends and confidants.
- New people may come to the field, and they will be looking for new friends. Those who stay may be able to help them adjust—and make friends while doing that.
- Those who stay may consider the broader missionary “family” in their area including people serving with other agencies.
- They may try new things and doing things in new ways. While doing so they may make new friends.

Above all they need to feel free to grieve their losses during this time of transition. This just “comes with the territory” of missionary life, so everyone needs to expect it and make the best of it.

As time goes on new relationships will develop. These relationships will not be the same as the old ones, but some may be even better.

11

...about Coping with Change

Jonah faced change in his life when God told him to become the first cross-cultural missionary by going east and confronting Nineveh (Jonah 1). Jonah went west. When he finally obeyed, the people in Nineveh responded to his message and repented. However, rather than rejoicing, Jonah became disillusioned and angry because of God's grace and compassion for a despised people group. Though succeeding outwardly, he failed inwardly.

At the beginning of his second term of missionary service (Acts 15) Paul suggested to Barnabas that they go back and visit people where they had been before to see how everyone was doing. However, as recorded in the verses immediately following that, Paul wound up going with Silas (rather than Barnabas), going to Macedonia (rather than to Asia), and meeting new people (rather than visit people they had seen before). Paul adapted to the changes and became a successful missionary, both inwardly and outwardly.

Know that change happens.

Even if your life seems to be predictable and stable right now, sooner or later you will probably have to cope with such changes as Paul did in Acts 15-16. Someone has said that the only thing that does not change is change itself. This has been true of cross-cultural missionaries from the beginning. Some people thrive on change and seek it out, but others dread change and struggle through it when it

comes. Most people want enough change to keep life interesting, but not so much as to make them uneasy.

What can one do to get through those inevitable changes that happen in life? Of course, change itself is not the problem—the problem is in how we deal with it when it happens. Here are some ways to cope.

Anchor to a point of stability.

The Bible is clear that our point of stability is in God himself.

- 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).

To successfully adapt to change, we must keep our commitment to God up-to-date. Without this secure anchor, we may become like Jonah rather than like Paul.

Expect emotions.

When you face change and emotions of all kinds come flooding in, you may say, "I don't understand why this has affected me so much." One moment you are laughing, the next you are crying—because you are normal. Nearly every emotion occurs during change. Here are some of the most common, illustrated in Paul's life as he experienced great change at the end of his third term.

- Uncertainty about the future may result in fear, worry, anxiety, apprehension, dread, self-doubt, or panic. Paul said he was going to Jerusalem, not knowing what would happen to him there (Acts 20:22).
- Being forced to change may result in stress, anger, frustration, or hostility. Paul felt compelled by the Spirit (Acts 20:22).

- Looking at what you are losing may result in sadness, depression, despondency, or despair. Paul wept as he was about to leave (Acts 20:36).
- Considering new opportunities may result in joy, elation, or happiness. Paul said he looked forward to finishing the course and completing his task (Acts 20:24).

Note that Paul acknowledged his emotions, and this allowed him to cope and continue with his work. These emotions may overlap, or you may find yourself on a pendulum swinging back and forth between them. Acknowledge and express them as you hold on to your anchor. Trying to build a dam to hold them inside may result in the dam bursting and the emotions spilling out.

Take time to grieve.

Your losses are real. It is all right (even necessary) to do all the things Paul and the elders from Ephesus did as they departed from friends in Acts 20:37-38.

- Wept
- Embraced
- Kissed
- Grieved

Coming to terms with your losses as you adjust to change takes time. Trying to rush through without getting closure on what you are leaving will make it hard to enter your new roles. (See the brochure on grief)

Swim with the current.

When you feel like you are being swept along in a torrent of change, swim with the current as long as it is not taking you away from the work God called you to do. If you are called to put God's word into the language of the people, you may insist on using a quill pen and parchment to make copies of it (or even a Gutenberg press or even moveable type). However, learning to use the computer will make your work more effective.

We have proverbs expressing this.

- When the wind blows, don't build windbreaks, build windmills.
- If life gives you lemons, make lemonade.
- When the river flows, don't just build a dam, put in a hydroelectric generator.

Swimming upstream may simply exhaust you while going with the flow may accomplish your purpose. Stubborn rigidity may defeat you while flexibility may get you through the torrent. The only time not to harness the energy of the current is if it is carrying you away from what God has called you to do. In this case, you may have to swim across the current and get out of the water.

Find friends.

Pride makes some people try to cope alone, a most difficult thing to do. Sharing with other people is a great help. Bravery may mean having the courage to ask for help when you need it. Here are some people who can swim with you—or throw you a life jacket.

- People who have been through the change you are facing. They may have helpful suggestions to cope or mentor you through those changes.
- Your family (missionary, church, and biological) cares, so someone in that family will listen to you and help.
- Close friends whom you trust deeply will allow you to express your fears and frustrations, and they may offer ways to cope.
- Member care people in your organization can help you function through its changes.
- Pastors or counselors with no connection to your organization can bring an outside objectivity not found within your agency. When facing new dangers in Jerusalem, Paul called on the elders of the Ephesian Church (Acts 20:17).

Focus on the good.

Every change has both good and bad in it. You may be leaving friends, but you will also make new friends. You may have to

leave a task you know well, but you will also learn to do something new. Focus on good new things.

You have the choice of looking back at what you are leaving or looking ahead to where you are going. Paul wanted to finish the course, to complete the task. Keeping your attention on what God has called you to keeps you moving in the right direction. Concentrating on him and his goodness as your point of stability, you can navigate change. Remember that every glass that is half empty is also half full. Optimists may make as many mistakes as pessimists, but they have a lot more fun getting where they are going.

Take one step at a time.

When you begin to feel overwhelmed by the size of the change, break it up into smaller parts. It may seem hopeless to walk across the continent, but many people have done it—one step at a time.

Your new assignment may be to begin a school in a village that has never had one. You went to school but have never started one so the task seems hopeless. Take it step by step.

- Find a place to meet.
- Select a curriculum.
- Hire some teachers.
- Etc.

Take care of yourself.

During change some people forget to care for themselves. They need to care for themselves in every way, spiritually, socially, physically.

- Have a daily devotional time.
- Spend time daily with spouse and family.
- Schedule time with other missionaries.
- Eat good healthy meals.
- Exercise several times a week.

- Get rest—keep a Sabbath.

Remember that it will end.

Every stream or river ends at a lake, sea, or ocean sooner or later. Likewise, every torrent of change comes to an end, and you will experience feelings of stability and normalcy again. Keep this in mind as you feel like you are being helplessly swept along in the current.

When people move to a new position in a different city, they may ask how long it will be before it really feels like home. Although some people make it sooner, it takes a full year for many to adapt to the change. It may not feel like home until you have gone through every season, every holiday, etc.

12

...about Re-Entry

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. Let us look at how you can prevent some of these feelings by leaving well, entering well, and being aware of some of the pitfalls in going home.

Leaving Well

One of the things that may increase your re-entry stress is not leaving your mission field correctly. The last part of Acts 20 gives us a good example of missionaries leaving well. Paul had spent three years in Ephesus and was headed back to his passport country and headquarters in Jerusalem. Dave Pollock is fond of saying that to leave well you should build a “RAFT,” so let us see how Paul fulfilled that acronym.

- **Reconciliation.** When leaving, you may try to deal with tensions in relationships by ignoring them, hoping they will just disappear. However, they do not. We carry them inside, and they interfere with new relationships. If we ever spend time with the other party again, the tensions will still be there and even harder to settle. Paul reminded the Ephesian elders how he had lived among them the whole time he was there and that he never even took support from them but was always giving.
- **Affirmation.** Let others know how you respect and appreciate them by telling them how important their friendship has been and how you enjoyed working with them. As you acknowledge how people have blessed you, you will become aware of what you have gained. Paul commits the Ephesians to God’s grace and warns them of potential difficulties.
- **Farewells.** Say good-bye to people, pets, places, and possessions. Take pictures and small reminders of the good things that have happened to you. After Paul was done speaking, they all prayed, wept, embraced, kissed, went to the ship, and tore themselves away.
- **Think destination.** While saying your good-byes, begin thinking realistically about where you are going. Think of it as a visit to the place you used to call home and imagine realistically what it will be like there. Paul wanted to be in Jerusalem by the day of Pentecost, but he also realized that there were hardships facing him there.

One thing that is particularly difficult is being forced to leave the field before you really want to. This can be because of health problems in yourself or family members, difficulty with a teenager, and a host of other things. In such cases you may have feelings of failure, depression, discouragement, resentment, and guilt. In such cases it helps to acknowledge your grief, face present realities, draw a healthy line on the past, and commit yourself to the present task.

Traveling

Airplanes are wonderful for getting home in a hurry, but they provide little time to “leave” your host country in your thinking. There is little time to grieve your losses and anticipate your arrival as you fly home, and sometimes you are still “traveling” in your thinking even when your body has arrived back home. In one sense many people are still transitioning for several days or weeks after they arrive home. They unpack their suitcases long before they unpack their minds.

Although Paul was in a hurry to leave to get home in time, he had time to think as he traveled. Remember that he was covering more than 600 miles by ship at the mercy of the winds, and he had to make a “connection” (find another ship headed his way) after the first 200 miles. People back home may not understand and think it is extravagant, but a week in Hawaii or in Europe on the way home is a good way to transition more effectively.

Re-Entering Well

Of course, the first steps to re-entering well are to build a good RAFT and give yourself some time to transition on the way home. Now you find out if your expectations are realistic or not. Your expectations form the basis for evaluating everything back home, and everyone has expectations even if they deny them.

Unfortunately expectations may be based on what was true one, two or four years ago. However, during that time everything has changed—you, your friends and family, your church, and your culture.

- You have changed. Before you left, you drove your car to the corner store, threw away food, and discarded plastic bags without thinking. Now you walk half a mile, take food home from the restaurant, and hoard bags. Paul had changed, and he told the people in his passport country about persecuting followers of the Way, being struck blind on the road, and then being sent to the Gentiles (Acts 22)

- Your friends and family have changed. You used to belong to the group, know where you fit with everyone, and friends confided in you and listened to you. While you were gone, new people came into the group, and your friends are involved in different activities. You now feel like a marginal person, do not understand the jokes others laugh at, and misinterpret some of the things they say and do.
- Your church has changed. When you left, it may have seemed to be such a mission-minded church, but now no one seems very interested in missions. When you try to talk about your mission experience, people may listen politely for a few minutes, then launch into an excited conversation about how the local football team is doing. When Paul came home from his first term (Acts 15) of missionary service, people from the church maintained that his converts were not saved. At the end of Paul’s third term (Acts 22) people in his own denomination were excited. However, when he went to the big church in town, the people basically listened politely until he mentioned his missionary call; then they called for his death.
- Your culture has changed. Alvin Toffler wrote *Future Shock* to point out that cultures now change so fast that even the people living in them can barely keep up with the changes. People gone for several years often return to a culture quite different from the one they left. Something as simple as walking into a store and buying something can be overwhelming.

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.

13

...about Home Ministry Assignment

Andrew, a TCK, wrote, “I’m really struggling with HMA. It’s just so hard. Fish bowl. Being on. Travel. Exhaustion.... we are going for 6 months. Starting in summer. I dread these times. For me after 26 years as MK and missionary. I struggle most with leaving my family, raising support, and keeping my family and myself healthy.”

Furlough & HMA

Until the middle of the 20th century, missionaries often returned to their passport country on a regular basis. The usual pattern was four years on the field followed by one year of “furlough,” at “home”, and this was repeated as long as they served overseas. They usually literally went “overseas” because they often traveled by cargo ship. There was no other way to get there.

When they went to the field, and when they returned home, they were in transit for several weeks, often with other missionaries on the ship. They had time to talk with the other missionaries in this small group of a dozen or so people. So they arrived home debriefed and somewhat rested.

Today missionaries can board an airplane and be “home” within 48 hours from nearly anywhere in the world, but with no opportunity to rest and debrief. It is called Home Ministry Assignment with deputation to raise funds and prayer support. They may be expected to “hit the ground running” with meetings scheduled the weekend after they arrive.

Missionaries will probably always be asked, “How is your vacation going?” by someone at a meeting, but agencies should be understanding enough to have their missionaries take at least six weeks off (preferably

three months) after they arrive home. This time allows the missionaries to get settled in, rest, and greet friends and family at home.

Family (Children) & Spouse

Raising funds and having prayer partners often mean that one parent is gone much of the time, so their family life is different from what it was on the field. If the children are in school it may mean that they have a, different school on each HMA, and they may have difficulty adjusting. In addition, if it is a short HMA, it may mean changing schools as well as cultures during the academic year.

These times of separation may put a strain on marriage relationships. If one spouse travels while the other remains at home to care for the children and the house, the one at home may feel abandoned and exhausted while imagining how easy the traveling one has it. Likewise, the one driving mile after mile may feel exhausted and think about how good the one at home has it. In addition, the TCKs often do not know their biological relatives, and they may feel odd calling these people “Aunt” and “Uncle” when they have left many aunts and uncles in their host country.

Some missionaries try to diminish these problems by home schooling and taking the whole family when traveling. Some even buy RVs so that they can take the family everywhere, and they always sleep in the same beds. Other missionaries decrease these problems by buying a house in their passport country, and then they concentrate on raising funds in smaller areas so that they do not need to travel great distances. They spend each HMA in the same place so that the TCKs have a set of playmates and friends every time they change between host and passport countries.

Missionaries may ask their children to help them raise funds by “performing” through music or skits. People in the congregation often think it is cute when the children are small, but the children themselves may dislike performing and begin to rebel or develop bad attitudes. Parents must be very careful when doing this.

Family (Extended) & “Friends”

While families are serving overseas, cousins may have married so that missionaries do not know their new in-laws, and loved grandparents may have died so that missionaries may be grieving when other family and friends are past that. Siblings who did not want to say “No” when asked

years ago may have taken a “share” in missionaries: however, they have not given the money promised, so the relationships are awkward.

Missionaries may find that they do not fit into the groups they left at home. The faces in the group look the same, but those at home as well as the missionaries themselves have changed, and they no longer have much in common. Those back “home” seem to be materialistic and superficial. They would rather talk about who won the football game last weekend than people giving their life to Christ. Missionaries may feel marginalized, lonely, and isolated. They may have to initiate conversations rather than responding to statements from people at home.

Missionaries looking for new friends may find that deep relationships are difficult. Both they and the new “friends” they are trying to make know that they will soon be parting again and neither want to invest in short relationships. These are difficult situations, but some of these suggestions may help.

- Fellowship with other missionaries on HMA may be helpful when they meet at conferences
- Retired missionaries in the community will know what those on HMA are going through, and they may want friendship as well.

Food & Health

Eating may be a problem during HMA. Some missionaries talk about “fast food furlough fat.” Fast food is not the only cause of weight gain. Here are some additional items making food a problem for missionaries.

- People at home often offer visiting missionaries their best, richest foods.
- Missionaries do not want to offend the cooks by not eating very much.
- Many churches have potluck meals with everyone wanting the missionaries to at least taste their best food.
- Missionaries may find it hard to burn all those calories as they sit for hours while driving to their next destination. Although nothing is perfect, one good way is to explain that too much food leads to problems and then eat very small servings.

In addition to food, missionaries may find it difficult to maintain health in other ways while doing deputation.

- Getting rest. In the Ten Commandments God asked for a day of rest during each week, and most people do this on a weekend; however, Saturdays and Sundays are not good Sabbaths for missionaries on HMA

since those are usually travel and speaking days. Picking another day may help. Although some on HMA specify a day, some may simply keep close records and make sure they get one Sabbath a week.

- Exercising regularly. Although not mentioned as much as food and rest, Paul wrote that physical training is of some value (not as valuable as godliness, which is valuable for both this life and the next). Missionaries on deputation may find it hard with their variable schedule, but they can keep a daily written record of times when they have walked, run, or played their favorite sports past the point of perspiration for at least a half hour several times a week.

Frustration & Surprises

Missionaries on HMA often feel frustrated about some things, and those on their first HMA may find some surprises. Here are some of the frustrations they may feel.

- Given 3-5 minutes to share what they have been doing the last four years
- Being away from the work God had called them to do
- Feeling guilty about all the responsibilities they left for someone else to do
- Grieving for all the things and people they left behind
- Visiting one of their sending churches where the leader does not recognize them
- Fearing they will do some simple thing, such as buying gasoline, incorrectly
- Funding coming in very slowly
- Not understanding what is being asked for in a form they are filling out

Missionaries who have served several terms overseas know about many things to expect, but they may find some surprises. Those on their first HMA are even more likely to be surprised.

- They are asked, “How is your vacation coming?”
- Even though they are “home,” they feel like they are living in a strange country.
- They become critical or even angry with people at home.
- One on HMA said, “My church is comatose and doesn’t even know it!”
- Another said, “I don’t feel at home. I feel different.”

Other Concerns

Missionaries on HMA may feel like they are “living in fishbowls with a different group of people staring into the bowl every week. Movie stars and popular musicians live that kind of life where everyone is watching, and they are disappointed when no one is watching because they assume that they are no longer popular.

Missionaries may not like “being on” all the time and may not enjoy living in a fish bowl. This may be true of TCKs, especially if they are asked to dress in national’s clothing. Teens may be quite sensitive to this.

TCKs graduating from high school returning to their passport country for the last HMA may find this a difficult transition. They often profit greatly from attending one of the one-two week TCK transition seminars offered by the member care providers listed on <http://www.missionarycare.com/links.html>.

Part 2. Everyday Challenges

Many missionaries move from time-oriented cultures to event-oriented ones. The chapter about managing time in a culture where events are more important will help make this change. Most people today expect culture shock during those first few months after the honeymoon period is over, but many are not prepared for the lasting culture stress that remains years later. Although they may not have more friends and family die than do other people, missionaries experience much more loss of many other types so they tend to face more grief over these other losses.

Some missionaries feel guilty over a variety of things so they need to distinguish between feeling guilty and being guilty as well as to know what to do in each case. Since the time of Jonah, missionaries have felt anger, a human emotion. The chapter about anger will help missionaries know how to respond to that anger. Under stress in other cultures missionaries often have problems sleeping. The chapter about sleep gives many tips on how to get restful sleep.

14

...about Event-Oriented Cultures (Time Management)

(with Marty Seitz)

The phrase “time management” would not even naturally occur in the language of an event-oriented culture. It is a phrase that would only occur to someone coming into such a culture from a time-oriented one. In time-oriented cultures we think of time as a commodity. Our language reflects this when we talk about “spending” or “saving” time and when we talk about “investing” or “wasting” time. The phrase “time is money” would make little sense in an event-oriented culture.

However, since many missionaries are from time-oriented cultures and receive support from people with that orientation, it remains relevant to their lives when interacting with family and supporters back in their passport countries.

Jesus lived in a culture in which people did not wear watches on their wrists and did not hang clocks on every wall. Sometimes he responded immediately and went to people, and at other times he delayed his response or withdrew to be alone.

For example, on one occasion when two of John’s disciples began following Jesus, he did not send them away but spent the day with them (John 1:39). Likewise, when Nicodemus came to him at night, Jesus did not say that it was time to go to bed but spent time carefully answering his question (John 3:1-21).

However, on another occasion when his brothers urged him to publicly show himself to the world, Jesus said the time was not right.

He said, “You go to the Feast. I’m not yet going up to this Feast, for the right time has not yet come.” Then when his brothers left for the feast, Jesus also went in secret. (John 7:1-10).

Between these events, Jesus urged his disciples into action because the harvest time had arrived (John 4:35). Likewise we find in Matthew 4:17 that the time had come for Jesus to preach and in Matthew 16:21 that the time had come for Jesus to explain to his disciples what was going to happen. In these cases time referred to an order of events or an opportunity rather than to a schedule, so Jesus dealt with time in a variety of ways. How do we manage our time in an event-oriented culture? Let us consider some ways.

Be God-oriented first.

When asked what was the most important commandment and how to obtain eternal life, Jesus replied with what we call the Great Commandment—putting God first in every area of life (Matthew 22, Mark 12, Luke 10). **Your time with God is the most important thing in either a time-oriented or and event-oriented culture.** Settle this before attempting to answer questions about time vs. event or task vs. people.

The most important question is, “What does God want me to do in this situation?”

- Ask him.
- Pray for wisdom, guidance and help in knowing what to do with your time.
- Look for Scripture passages related to event-oriented cultural responses.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to illumine passages.
- Ask people to pray for you to have God’s wisdom in how to spend your time.

Choose today.

The apostle Paul wrote that for the sake of the gospel, so that some might be saved, he became all things to all people (1

Corinthians 9:19-23). So even if you feel “out of step” and never fully get used to late meetings and the slowness with which events move, join the culture in which you are serving. Remember that people in that culture get things done in their own time, and they often get them done very effectively. For their benefit, choose to try to avoid offending them. It may even be good to develop the “bad” habit of being tardy while working in an event-oriented culture. Your being late may be less offensive to members of an event-oriented culture than your always being “on time.”

Teach and be taught.

First you probably need to learn about the event-oriented culture in which you are living, so be open to being taught.

- Observe.
 - How do people greet one another?
 - How do they connect socially?
 - What do they talk about?
 - How do they say good bye?
- Ask.
 - Consult with other missionaries.
 - Ask nationals about time-related issues and norms.
 - Ask to which events one can be late and how to interpret the time stated. For example does 8:00 mean 8:00, 8:15, 8:30, or 9:00?
 - Find out what reasons for tardiness are acceptable.
 - Ask how late you can or should be. That may depend on your status.
- Read. As you read books about the culture, pay close attention to the sections about the use of time.

Time may be very specific to particular events. For example it may be more acceptable to miss the wedding, than to miss the reception—and perhaps you must not leave the reception before the meal is served and the cake is cut. If your visit to the wake at a

funeral is too short, it may be perceived as cursory, indicating that you do not really share in the grief of the family.

After you have learned about time in the culture and been accepted by the people there, it may be good to teach the nationals about your culture. That may help them understand you and interact well with other people from time-oriented cultures. One missionary said that those working with him came to admire his traits and activities even though they could not manage those themselves. In fact, they came to depend on his efficiency to get things done in situations when promptness was important.

Coach yourself well.

Quiet those automatic thoughts that condemn event-oriented people as inefficient, unproductive, and wasteful. Replace them with positive thoughts.

- I’m being productive in a different way.
- I’m expanding my repertoire of uses of time.
- I’m becoming more flexible for the Master’s use.
- I’m learning how to manage relationships instead of time.
- I’m learning how not to offend people.

Remember that use of time is not inherently a moral issue. You may just be learning to be more like Mary and less like Martha. What Martha was doing was not bad, but what Mary was doing was better at that time. You may have to earn the right to speak to people’s needs before presenting your extensively researched Bible study. Be sure you know what their needs are before you try to speak about them. Remember that the watch on the national’s arm may just be a status symbol, not an indicator of time-orientation.

Try these tricks of the trade.

Here are a few things you can do to help you adapt to the event-orientation of an event-oriented culture.

- Take your watch off.
- Remove all clocks from your home.

- Pay attention to the position of the sun instead of the minute hand on your watch.
- Build ample time cushions (between events) into your planning.
- Memorize Scripture when you wind up waiting for half an hour.
- Always carry a Bible or Testament so that you can use unexpected time for devotions, sermon preparation, class preparation, etc.
- Reward yourself for not being time-conscious.
- Make notes of good things that happen when you are not in a rush.
- Journal about times when you are not able to be time conscious.
- Use the time spent waiting to verify that your teaching is understood.
- Use time you spend waiting as a teaching/training opportunity to disciple someone.
- Use the time spent waiting to build rapport with nationals.
- Use the time to observe and learn about your host culture.

Get out of town.

You may want to “escape to a mountain” as Jesus did. At times he got away from people, and he encouraged his disciples to do the same thing. If you are from a time-oriented culture, you may feel more relaxed if you can get away to a place where “time management” is a meaningful concept. Just as you continue to speak your mother tongue at home even when living in another country, there is nothing wrong with having a place where you can make lists and accomplish “things” in timely fashion. Just as it is relaxing in a time-oriented culture to take some time away from that orientation, it may be relaxing to take some time away from an event-oriented culture, time to study and “get things done.” Rather than a retreat from time-orientation, it is a retreat to time-orientation.

Some people may believe that a Christian worker, especially a missionary, should not refuse to spend time with people who want them to stay, but that was not the case with the apostle Paul. At the end of his second term he briefly visited Ephesus, leaving two other missionaries to continue the work. When the people of Ephesus

asked him to spend more time with them, he declined, saying that he would come back if it was God’s will (Acts 18: 20-21). Of course, he did return to Ephesus during his third term and spent several years there (Acts 19:8-10). Not only did Paul leave when asked to stay longer, but also at times he purposely avoided seeing people when he was in a hurry. At the end of his third term and in a hurry to reach Jerusalem, Paul decided to sail past Ephesus to avoid spending time there. Instead he stopped south of Ephesus and asked the elders of the church to come down to meet him briefly (Acts 20:16-38).

Parable of the exchange rate.

When you enter another country, you exchange your currency for the currency of that country. The exchange rate may vary if you exchange at a bank or in a store. It may vary from town to town. However, you soon learn what the rate is where you are so that you can soon figure how much money you will get for each unit of currency at home.

In the same way, when you enter another country, there is an exchange rate for time. What took one hour in your passport country may take two hours in a large city in the new one. What took one hour back “home” may take four hours in a small town. You can soon make the adjustment in determining the cost in “time” just as you can make the adjustment in terms of currency.

15

...about Culture Stress

You feel tired, anxious, discouraged, isolated, angry, and homesick but cannot think of any reason why you should feel that way. You have been on the field for several years, but these feelings always seem to be there—increasing and decreasing. You wonder what could be causing them. It could be culture stress. You may say, “I know about culture shock, but what is culture stress?” What is the difference between culture stress and culture shock? What causes culture stress?” What are its effects? What can be done about it? Can it be prevented? Let’s consider some of these questions.

What is culture stress?

Culture stress is the stress that occurs when you change to a different way of living in a new culture. It is what you experience as you move beyond understanding the culture to making it your own so that you accept the customs, becoming comfortable and at home with them. If you are trying to become a real part of the culture, to become bicultural, you are likely to experience culture stress as you assimilate some of the conventions to the point that they feel natural to you.

Of course, if you live in a “missionary ghetto,” you may experience little culture stress. Early modern missionaries often lived in compounds, which were physically identifiable as missionary ghettos. Today, even though some missionaries live physically in a national community, they have primarily relationships with other

missionaries. A missionary subculture may develop which becomes focused on itself and preoccupied with group concerns so that the missionaries experience little culture stress. Those trying to become an integral part of the national community are the ones who experience the greatest culture stress.

How is culture stress different from culture shock?

As culture shock was originally defined (honeymoon, crisis, recovery, adjustment), culture stress was considered to be a part of it. However, the word “shock” connotes something sudden and short-lived. Thus, many people today think of culture shock as the crisis stage (confusion, disorientation, and lack of control) and the recovery stage (language and cultural cues more familiar). These stages begin when the new missionary leaves the enthusiastic, exciting, optimistic tourist mode, usually beginning in a few weeks, worsening for about six months, and basically ending within a year or two.

Culture stress is the adjustment stage in which people accept the new environment, adopting new ways of thinking and doing things so that they feel like they belong to the new culture. This takes years, and some missionaries never complete it. This may go on and on.

What causes culture stress?

Many factors enter into the amount of culture stress one feels while living in another culture. Here are some of the major ones.

- **Involvement.** The more you become personally involved in the culture, the more culture stress you may feel. The tourist, the business person or someone from the diplomatic corps not committed to being the incarnation of Christ in that culture, may feel little culture stress.
- **Values.** The greater the differences in values between your home culture and your host culture, the greater the stress. Values of cleanliness, responsibility, and use of time may cause stress for

years. Cultures may appear similar on the surface but have broad differences in deeper values.

- **Communication.** Learning the meanings of words and rules of grammar are only a small part of being able to communicate effectively. The whole way of thinking, the common knowledge base, and the use of non-verbals are necessary and come only with great familiarity with the culture.
- **Temperament.** The greater the difference in your personality and the average personality in the culture, the greater the stress. A reserved person may find it difficult to feel at home where most people are outgoing extroverts. An extrovert may never feel at ease in a reserved culture.
- **Entry—re-entry.** Most missionaries, unlike immigrants, live in two cultures and may never feel fully at home in either. Every few years they change their place of residence, never fully adapting to the culture they are in at the time.
- **Children.** The more your children internalize the values of your host culture and the more you realize that they will be quite different from you, the more stress you may feel.
- **Multinational teams.** Although effectiveness of the ministry may increase, working together in your mission with people from cultures other than your host culture often adds to the culture stress.

What are the results of culture stress?

Many of the results of culture stress are the same as those of any other stress.

- Feelings of anxiety, confusion, disorientation, uncertainty, insecurity, and helplessness
- Fatigue, tiredness, lack of motivation, lethargy, lack of joy
- Illness (stress suppresses the immune system), concern about germs, fear of what might be in the food
- Disappointment, lack of fulfillment, discouragement, feeling hurt, feeling inadequate, feeling “out of it”

- Anger, irritability, contempt for the host culture, resentment (perhaps toward God), feelings of superiority or inferiority
- Rejection of the host culture, the mission board, even of God.
- Homesickness
- Etc.

Some people seem to believe that they can adapt to anything, even continual stress, without it hurting them. It just does not work that way. In the 1930s, stress researcher Hans Selye put rats under many different kinds of stress. He kept some in a refrigerator, others in an oven, made some swim for hours a day, injected others with chemicals, others with bacteria, etc. The results were almost always the same. The rats went through the same cycle. First was the alarm reaction in which resources were mobilized. Then came the resistance stage in which it seemed like an adequate adjustment had been made. But if the stressor was intense enough or long enough, sooner or later the stage of exhaustion occurred when the resources were depleted, and the rats collapsed. If the stressor continued, they died. You probably have seen people who seemed to be making an adequate adjustment, suddenly break down. Uninterrupted stress of enough intensity leads to exhaustion sooner or later in most individuals.

What can be done about culture stress?

Much can be done to decrease culture stress and make it manageable.

- **Recognition.** Realize that culture stress is inevitable for those attempting to become at home in a host culture, and look at what factors cause you the most stress.
- **Acceptance.** Admit that the host culture is a valid way of life, a means of bringing Christ to the people who live in it.
- **Communication.** Beware of isolating yourself from everyone in your home culture, those with whom you can relax and be yourself, those with whom you can talk.

- **Escape.** You need daily, weekly, and annual respites. God made the Sabbath for people, so be sure you keep it. Reading, music, hikes, worship (not leading it), and vacations are necessary.
- **Identity.** Know who you are and what you will allow to be changed about you. Acculturation inherently involves changes in your personality, so determine the unchangeables.
- **Activity.** Since stress prepares you for fight or flight, and as a missionary you can probably do neither, you must have some physical activity to use that energy. Sports, an exercise plan, and active games with family or friends can reduce stress.
- **Befriend a national family.** Get close to a national family just for fun, not to learn or evangelize. Learn how to have fun in that culture.

Can culture stress be prevented?

The answer to this is simple and short. No! Stress in general cannot be prevented—we all experience it in life. Trying to become at home in another culture is always a challenging venture.

However, like other stress, it can be managed, decreased to a level with which you can live—stress without distress. The factors that help you cope with stress are summarized in the three enduring things mentioned by Paul at the end of 1 Corinthians 13.

- **Faith.** In addition to faith in God, faith in yourself as a person created in God's image and called into his service will help you cope.
- **Hope.** Rather than feeling helpless, having not only the hope of eternity with God, but also hope in your future, knowing that he has good plans for you, will help you cope.
- **Love.** Finally, having both God's love and the love of his people to give you support in the stressful situations you face daily, will help you cope.

Stress is a part of life, and everyone learns how to manage it or suffers the consequences. Remember that not everyone can become at home in two cultures, and it typically takes a very long time for those who do it successfully.

16

...about Compassion Fatigue

Bill has been an effective and dedicated missionary for a decade, but now, in his mid-30s, his missionary service seems more like labor than a labor of love. He used to enjoy interacting with nationals and feel deep satisfaction in his friendships with them. Although he continues to spend time with them, he becomes annoyed at what he sees as their increasing demands.

From all appearances he is a successful missionary that others respect and even envy a bit; however, internally he is exhausted, feels isolated, and seems spiritually depleted. Even talking with his supportive wife does little to help. Bill is suffering from what has recently come to be called compassion fatigue.

What is compassion fatigue?

An article in *Family Practice Management* published by the American Academy of Family Physicians defines compassion fatigue as “a deep physical, emotional, and spiritual exhaustion accompanied by acute emotional pain”

<http://www.aafp.org/fpm/2000/0400/p39.html>.

Compassion fatigue is a combination of burnout and secondary trauma. In classical burnout missionaries cope by withdrawing and becoming less compassionate; however, missionaries with compassion fatigue continue to give fully to their

work with nationals. They often feel like they are being pulled irresistibly down by a whirlpool, and they are powerless to stop. These people may be viewed as incredibly dedicated and successful missionaries by others, but they often do not feel that way about themselves. Here are some of their major symptoms.

- Feelings of depression and hopelessness
- No feelings of accomplishment and joy
- Blaming and complaining about others
- Increasing irritability and anger
- Nightmares and other sleep problems
- Startled by unexpected sounds
- Personal and professional life not separate
- Intrusive frightening thoughts

Neither burnout nor secondary trauma are approved medical diagnoses, rather they are lay terms, as is “compassion fatigue.” Compassion fatigue is also sometimes used to describe an organization characterized by high absenteeism, turnover, and interpersonal conflict, or to describe the decrease over time of a whole country’s donations to victims of disasters such as earthquakes or floods. Here it is used to describe individuals showing signs of burnout and secondary trauma.

What does the Bible say about compassion fatigue?

The Bible never uses the term “compassion fatigue,” but Moses is a good example in that he continues for years until he finally breaks under it. Moses was not a missionary, but he was a Third Culture Kid who was leading a group of cross-cultural workers as they transitioned from one culture to another. At about the time of receiving the Ten Commandments, he shows tendencies toward compassion fatigue.

- Exodus 18. Only a couple of months out of Egypt and before receiving the commandments, Moses’ father-in-law told him, “What you are doing is not good... you will only wear yourself out. The work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it alone” (vs. 17-18).

- Exodus 32. A few weeks later as he was coming down Mt. Sinai with the commandments, Moses became so angry with the people that he destroyed the tablets on which God had written them.
- Exodus 34 and Deuteronomy 9. Moses went back up Mt. Sinai and spent nearly six weeks prostrate before God interceding for the people, but neither eating bread nor drinking water. A plague on the people followed.
- Numbers 11. On their way from Mt. Sinai to Kadesh Barnea the people complained, so God sent fire on them. Moses again interceded and then told God, “I cannot carry all these people by myself; the burden is too heavy for me... put me to death right now—if I have found favor in your eyes—and do not let me face my own ruin” (vs. 14-15).

One would think that Moses would change. However, 40 years later at Kadesh Barnea he was again leading the children of those he led at Mt. Sinai. The people were again complaining. Moses and his brother interceded, and they left the tent following God’s directions. However, when Moses spoke to the people he struck the rock twice with his staff rather than speaking to it as God had told him. This disobedient outburst resulted in Moses not being allowed to lead the people into the promised land (Numbers 20).

Do I have compassion fatigue?

Of course, you can look at the major symptoms above to get a general idea. Fortunately, the best measure of compassion fatigue is available online free of charge at http://www.proqol.org/ProQol_Test.html. It is available in about a dozen languages and is called the ProQuol, Professional Quality of Live Scale. The English version comes in a self-scoring format which includes scales for both burnout and secondary trauma. This test has high internal reliability but no research on validity. When scoring the test, be sure to reverse the scores for the items indicated on the burnout scale. Your scores will tell you if you are low, average, or high on both burnout and secondary trauma.

What causes compassion fatigue?

The major causes of compassion fatigue are not having time to do what needs to be done while serving others who suffer from many sources of traumatic stress. Missionaries may find that their time is taken by trying to meet the demands of headquarters, committees, field directors, nationals, governmental red tape, families, etc. They are serving people who suffer from illness, violence, poverty, alcohol, corrupt government, etc.

Missionaries try to get more time by eliminating things that would help them cope. They often engage in less and less of the following:

- Prayer, meditation, reading the Word
- Breaks through the day, and restful lunch (they read email, return phone calls, etc.)
- Time with friends, spouse, and children
- Exercise, sleep, and relaxed meals
- Hobbies and other outside interests

Everyone has exactly 24 hours in every day, and each person has to decide how he or she is going to use that time. Missionaries who spend all their time doing “God’s work” should remember that going beyond a certain point, the harder they work the less they accomplish. Coffee breaks were not given because employers cared for the workers, but because research showed that people who took them accomplished more than others who did not. During World War I Britain required people to work seven days a week, until research showed that people who worked six days a week (i.e. enjoyed a Sabbath) and had a day of rest accomplished more than those who worked seven.

Things to do to get over compassion fatigue?

The logical place to begin is with what Moses’ father-in-law suggested. First, Jethro listed Moses’ roles: be the people’s representative before God, teach them the decrees and laws, show them how to live, show them their duties. Second, Jethro told Moses

to select men who were capable, feared God, were trustworthy, and would not take dishonest gain. Then Moses was to appoint these men as officials in a hierarchy over groups of 10s, 50s, 100s, and 1000s (Exodus 18:19-23). In other words, delegate much of the work to others.

Later when Moses was complaining to God about the heavy load of carrying the people, God told Moses to choose 70 elders who were leaders and officials. Moses was to bring them to the Tent so that God could put the Spirit on them to help carry the burden of the people (Numbers 11:16-17). This was the same advice Jethro had suggested long before.

This is still great advice today, especially for people like Moses who seem to think that saving the world depends on them alone. All of us need others. Here are some further suggestions.

- Reaffirm your commitment to Christ, including daily time in the Word, meditation, and prayer as well as a weekly Sabbath (Matthew 22: 37).
- Reaffirm your commitment to others, including time for family, colleagues, and nationals (Matthew 22:39).
- Reaffirm your commitment to maintaining the temple of the Holy Spirit (your body), including eating right, getting daily rest, and exercising daily.
- Clarify your personal boundaries.
- Share your feelings with colleagues who can share theirs with you.
- Follow God’s call on your life even when it means saying “no” to good things.
- Develop a support system of people around you who listen well and care.

Things to stop doing to get over compassion fatigue?

- In addition to doing the things mentioned above, one should
- Stop blaming others. People at headquarters, your field director, or your principal may act in ways that you disapprove of, but people are not responsible for how you react.

- Stop complaining. When you talk with other discontented people, it only makes you feel worse. You may have heard that misery loves company; it should be stated that “misery loves miserable company.” Discontented people do not want others spreading cheer.
- Stop making big decisions. Do not decide to quit being a missionary, buy a luxury car, get a divorce, or any major life decision. You will be doubly sorry later.
- Stop looking for a quick fix, such as an affair, drugs, etc.

17

...about Bribes

Chatting with a relatively new missionary from another agency, a veteran missionary heard a familiar story. The new missionary had reserved a facility, but now the manager in charge of renting the building was saying that it may not be available as planned. Both missionaries knew that a gift to the agent would make the building available.

What is a “bribe?”

Two definitions of “**bribe**” are nearly always given in English. One is “anything given to people to persuade them to do something they would not ordinarily do.” The other is anything given to people in authority to persuade them to do something wrong.”

People working cross-culturally may pay **transactional bribes** in which they give officials money to do what those officials should do without payment. Those same people may pay **variance bribes** in which they do something illegal.

Extortion is demanding something from people by threatening some negative outcome if the demand is not met. Bribery offers favors or gifts but extortion demands with a threat. Bribery is when I give you money for a certain outcome; extortion is when I threaten something harmful unless you give me money.

A **gift** is something which is voluntarily transferred by one person to another without compensation. Note that unlike bribes gifts involve no demands or expectations and are given voluntarily.

Like “bribe” *Shochad*, the Hebrew word most often translated as bribe also has several meanings. In addition to bribe, it is also often translated as gift or reward. So, like the English word “bribe,” *shochad* has more than one meaning, meanings similar to those of transactional and variance bribes.

What does the Bible say about bribes?

The Old Testament has much to say about bribes including a word, *shochad*, that is most often translated as “bribe.” However, although several bribery situations occur in it, the New Testament does not use the word “bribe” at all except a few versions do in one verse in Acts.

The Bible gives repeated commands God’s people not to accept bribes, and it repeatedly condemns people who do. This condemnation of bribes is clearly stated throughout the Old Testament which always says it is wrong to accept a bribe. In addition, refusing bribes is always right. Unlike accepting bribes, the Bible does not say it is wrong to give a bribe. In fact, it has several passages that encourage giving bribes.

Although the Bible mentions extortion less frequently than it does bribes, both the Old Testament and the New Testament have passages about it. Some versions have more verses about extortion in the Old Testament, and other versions have more in the New Testament.

The Bible always condemns extorting from others, and the Bible always views the extorted person as a victim. Nowhere in Scripture is the victim told not give in to the extortioner nor does it indicate that the person who yields to extortion is guilty of any sin.

Of course, the Bible does not condemn the giving of gifts, as long as the “gifts” are not intended as bribes. People even brought gifts to Jesus himself.

What does the law say about bribes?

In the 1970s investigations found that hundreds of U.S. corporations admitted making payments totaling millions of dollars to foreign officials, politicians, and political parties. In a rare show of unity the U. S. Congress unanimously passed the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act (FCPA) in 1977.

This law included both civil and criminal penalties for both corporations and individuals even when the bribery took place in other countries. Companies paid millions of dollars in fines and individuals served years in prison. By 1998 thirty-three other countries had passed similar laws and signed agreements to combat bribery in business transactions together.

Although this law prohibits most bribery, contains an explicit exception to the bribery prohibition for "facilitating payments" for "routine governmental action." It gives examples of such things as obtaining permits, licenses or other official documents; processing governmental papers, such as visas, and so forth. Thus, the law agreed on by 33 nations forbids variance bribes, but not transactional bribes.

Of course, just because they are legal does not mean that they are good. Other organizations have urged including transactional bribes as well.

No similar laws exist for extortion. Demanding money from people under threat seems to be illegal in virtually all nations. Extortion is practiced in many nations, but it is officially viewed as a crime.

Reasons people cite to give or not give bribes

Missionaries come to different conclusions about whether or not they should ever give bribes. Here are some arguments in favor of giving bribes under some circumstances.

- Small-scale bribery is an accepted mechanism for legal transactions in many cultures.
- A “bribe” is really just a tip, a gift, or a donation.

- In many cultures missionaries can accomplish little without providing some financial incentive. In fact,
- they may not be able to get a visa to enter the country where God has called them to serve.
- The bribe provides additional income so the underpaid workers can support their families

Here are some reasons against giving bribes under any circumstances.

- When you pay, you help corrupt the one you bribe.
- Such bribery may have unintended social consequences, keeping a culture unstable.
- Paying shows a lack of faith in God to accomplish his purposes.
- Giving bribes sears the conscience of the giver.
- Your supporters may lose confidence in you if they find out you paid a bribe.
- Bribery may cause dissention on your team if others have different convictions about it.

Other considerations

Deciding whether or not to give a bribe is not simply a matter of lining up arguments for both sides and coming to some conclusion. Here are some other things to consider.

- Intermediaries you hire may pay the bribes for you out of what they charge.
- Humanitarian aid may function as a bribe even if you did not intend it that way.
- Appropriate gift giving varies widely between cultures.

Even if you ask nationals about bribery customs, you may not be proficient enough in the language to ask the question or to understand the answer. Your nonverbal behavior may not communicate to them, and you may miss what their nonverbal behavior is saying to you.

Even when learning the language from nationals, one may miss parts of the culture for years. Don Richardson tells about that in

Peace Child when the Sawi saw Judas as the hero when they heard the story of redemption.

Finally, remember that Christians reading the same scriptures often come to different conclusions. For example, some people totally abstain from alcohol, others drink it only at communion, others cook with it, and still others drink socially.

What should one do?—And not do?

The best thing one can do is to take preventive measures to avoid being asked for bribes. One can cultivate relationships in culturally accepted ways such as writing thank you notes or giving people appropriate gifts.

If asked for a bribe, one can do a variety of things, such as reading the Word on bribery, asking God for wisdom, reading available material, consulting with missionary colleagues and nationals.

Of course, there are some things one should not do. For example, do not accept bribes, do not de-Christianize other missionaries who do give bribes, and do not give a bribe to cover up something wrong.

Here is a series of four questions that may be helpful”

- Stage 1: Is it a bribe, a gift, or extortion?
- Stage 2: Is this sinful?
- Stage 3: Is this legal?
- Stage 4: Are there other considerations?

More Information

This brochure is a compilation of the summaries of six chapters of and e-book, *Missionaries and Bribes*, by Ronald Koteskey. Each section in this brochure is expanded to between six and ten page chapters in the book.

Missionaries and Bribes is available free of charge in five formats for reading on your computer or e-reader. You can download it at <http://missionarycare.com/missionaries-and-bribes.html>

18

...about Rejection and Betrayal (by Those They Serve)

After more than 30 years of successful teaching in the Bible school, Bill was finishing the final course before the class graduated. He handed out the Bible school's evaluation form to the six students in the class and left the room while they filled out the forms.

When the director handed out the evaluation results to the Bible faculty, Bill found that five of the six students had given him the lowest possible ratings on everything, said that he did not know how to teach, that he should not be allowed to teach until he took a course about teaching, and so forth.

Bill was devastated because he had advised these students for three years, and they had often been in his home. He developed a fear of what else students might say, prayed for God to protect him from his students, and finally quit teaching a few years later to devote himself to member care.

Bill knew that Isaiah had said that Jesus would be "despised and rejected" by people (Isaiah 53). He knew John had said that "his own did not receive him," that Judas "betrayed him," and that the people he came to save shouted "crucify him" (John 1, 18 and 19). All of that was necessary for Jesus to die for people's sins, but Bill did not think it would happen to him as he came to spread the good news of salvation and to give food to the hungry. Does this happen to others? Who does it? Why do they do it? What can the 'victim' do?

How often does this happen?

Only God knows. Such rejection and betrayal often leads to feelings of inadequacy and failure which few people discuss openly. Although there appears to be no research on this topic for missionaries, in the 1990s research on pastors who read *Christianity Today*, *Leadership*, and *Your Church* magazines found that about a quarter of the pastors had been terminated or forced to resign by their church—and a quarter of those had experienced it more than once. In addition, a third of all the pastors said the pastor serving before them had been forced out—and a third of those forced out left the ministry for good. Clearly, the rejection of Christian workers is not rare.

Were cross-cultural workers in the Bible rejected and betrayed?

Of course they were! The Bible contains many examples, but here are just a few from the life of Moses in the Old Testament and Paul in the New Testament.

Moses had been sent by God to bring the Israelites out of Egypt (Exodus 3). Here are a few of the problems he faced.

- His brother and his sister “began to talk against Moses” because of his wife (Numbers 12).
- The people “raised their voices,” “wept aloud,” “grumbled against Moses,” “grew in impatience,” “gathered in opposition,” and wanted to go back to Egypt (Numbers 14, 20, and 21).
- Korah “became insolent” and led 250 community leaders to oppose Moses. This resulted in the earth opening and swallowing the 250 men and their families. The next day others in the community still grumbled, and a plague killed 14,700 of them (Numbers 16).

Talking about Paul, God said, “This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles....and the people of Israel (Acts 9). As Paul began to do this, he had good results on Cyprus, and things began well in Pisidian Antioch where he was invited to speak again the next week (Acts 13:1-42). However, people soon began to turn on Paul.

- In Antioch, some of the Jews became jealous and “talked abusively” against Paul. People of the city “stirred up persecution”...and “expelled them from their region” (Acts 13:43-52)
- In Iconium, at first many Jews and Gentiles believed. However, later “there was a plot afoot” to “mistreat them and stone them,” so they left town (Acts 14:1-7).
- In Lystra, things were going so well that the people there thought Paul was a god! However, the crowd eventually stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city because they thought he was dead (Acts 14:8-20).

What happens?

As noted above, a wide variety of things can occur, ranging from “talking against” people to killing them. In addition, today’s technology makes many new things possible.

- Damaging emails can be sent at once to hundreds of people, including colleagues or supporters.
- Anonymous nasty letters mailed directly to missionaries may hurt incredibly.
- Innuendo of scandal posted on Facebook or other social networks can wreck missionary reputations.
- Critics can use smart phones to “tweet” damaging text messages to thousands.

There seems to be virtually no limit to how rejection and betrayal can occur.

Who does it?

Only people who have personal relationships can betray missionaries, just as Judas, a trusted disciple, betrayed Jesus. In *Why*, a song about this event, Michael Card says, “Only a friend can betray a friend, a stranger has nothing to gain, and only a friend comes close enough to ever cause so much pain.” Usually the deeper the

relationship, the greater is the devastation of the betrayal. Here are some examples.

- Students. Many teachers find students they have known and trusted for years have ridiculed and betrayed them.
- Congregations. Many pastors have been shocked when small groups persuade entire congregations to ask them to leave.
- Pastors. Missionaries supervising national pastors may find those pastors rejecting or betraying them.
- Patients. Medical missionaries may find that people whose lives they save betray them.
- The Poor. Relief workers may find themselves rejected or betrayed by those who most needed the food they provided.
- Missionaries. Field directors who came to lead the field may find that missionaries they came to serve reject them—and even betray them.

Why do they do it?

Sin is at the root, but it may be expressed in a variety of forms as we can see in the following examples from the Bible and modern missionaries.

- Jealousy. The Jews in Antioch were jealous of the crowds Paul drew (Acts 13:45). These Jews then followed Paul from city to city (Acts 14).
- Dislike. Aaron and Miriam did not like Moses' wife (Numbers 12).
- Fear and want. The people who criticized Moses were frightened by the lack of water (Numbers 20-21).
- Revenge. Students may reject or betray teachers who discipline them or demand high standards.
- Greed. Patients may sue physicians to get whatever money they can.

What can one do?

“An ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure” is a common saying that is relevant here. Keeping good relationships with people is always important, but it is especially so in a culture that emphasizes such relationships. Missionaries must not become so task-oriented that they neglect meeting social needs. Missionaries rejected or betrayed by those they serve can do the following.

- Pray for the offenders. Both Jesus and Moses prayed for those who mistreated them, both asking God to forgive the offenders. Moses went so far as to ask God to “blot me out of the book” if he did not forgive the people (Exodus 32:32). Jesus asked God to forgive those who crucified him because they did not realize what they were doing (Luke 23:34).
- Forgive them. Of course, both Jesus and Paul forgave those who had rejected or betrayed them as well.
- Revisit them. Because people in Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra had persecuted him, plotted against him and stoned him, one might have thought that Paul would avoid returning. However, Paul made it a point to return home through all three places, encouraging and strengthening believers there (Acts 14:21-22).
- Find a mediator. If effective in the culture where missionaries serve, they may use the three-step procedure that Jesus proposed. First, go to the offending person alone. If that does not work, they may take one or two others and go back to the offending person. Finally, if even that does not work, they may bring it before the church (Matthew 18:15-17).
- Resolve disagreements as soon as possible. Festering wounds, even if imaginary, can develop into deadly relationships when left alone.
- Do not say or do anything that one might regret later. In the heat of an intense discussion filled with anger, it is much better to remain silent than to vent all the hurt and frustration one feels at the moment. Take time to think and pray about what to say or do.
- Have other missionaries who can help you as you respond. Personal attacks on missionaries and their ministry usually cloud

judgments. Missionaries need close friends to evaluate the attacks and help devise a response.

Finally, remember that God used Judas' money-making betrayal combined with Jesus' obedient submission to save a sinful world.

19

...about Managing Money

Imagine these situations: some of the other missionaries on your team make reservations at a five-star hotel for the whole group going to the conference. When you question staying in such an expensive place with lodging at a fraction of the cost across the street, they point out that your agency is paying for it so it is no problem.

When back in your host country dining out, others want to eat at a very expensive restaurant with lots of "atmosphere." You think about the little cash you have left at the end of the month for food for your own family and suggest a more modest restaurant. They say not to always be so concerned about money, that you can't really enjoy things when you are.

In a committee meeting deciding on a new building, other missionaries vote to borrow the money and begin right away even though your field has only about one-tenth of the funds, and getting more is unlikely. They say build now; pay later. You suggest building without borrowing. They chide you for your little faith, saying that people will give when you begin.

Can some general principle be applied in all situations, or does each instance have to be considered individually? Does it make a difference if agency funds, your expense account, or your personal funds are involved? What about designated versus undesignated funds? Let us consider these questions.

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.

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.

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 out of their passport cultures for several years at a time give someone 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 Salary Account

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 whether 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.

Personal Gifts

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.

Concluding Comments

In conclusion, let us consider some specifics about being good stewards.

- Tithes and Offerings. It is important to present at least your tithe as soon as you receive the money. If you wait to do this at the end of your pay period, there is not likely to be anything left even for a tithe, much less an offering.
- Care for yourself. Being a good steward means caring for yourself and your family. Eating right, having adequate clothing and shelter, and having times for rest and restoration of yourselves means that you will be good servants of God.
- Debt. Borrowing to buy things that depreciate is rarely a good idea. Borrowing for things that appreciate in value may be good. However, beware of getting heavily into debt, as some people do (even for good things, such as education for themselves or their children). You may get so deeply in debt for education that by the time you pay the debt off you have also bought a house, have entered a career path, have more children—and they never make it to serving in another culture.
- Savings and retirement. Saving money for education, and especially for retirement, is good stewardship. In many sending countries some form of Social Security is available for older people, but it often puts them at the poverty level which may make them a burden to others.
- Can’t take it with you. Remember that you cannot take money with you when you die. Jesus pointed out that people who hoard their money for themselves thinking they can “take life easy, eat,

drink, and be merry” soon die and leave it all for others (Luke 12:16-21).

- Can send it ahead. Though you can’t take it with you, you can send it ahead. Jesus advised his followers not to store up things on earth where insects, decay, and thieves destroy, but to store up treasures in heaven where they last forever. You cannot serve both God and money.

20

...about Grief

You may say, “I don’t need to know anything about grief. No one in my family has died, and when someone does, I’ll fly home to the funeral.” If and when that happens, it may be one of your easier encounters with grief because everyone there will understand your grief, and your culture has developed rituals to enable you to resolve your grief. Although we commonly think of grief as related to the death of a loved one, there are many other causes of grief.

The dictionary defines grief as the “intense emotional suffering caused by loss of any kind.” Missionaries experience many losses that other people do not, so those people do not understand. There is no funeral or other ritual to assist in grieving over these losses. Missionaries may offer true, but over-spiritualized, platitudes in denial of the losses they experience. When people are dying and losing everything, we do not question their denial, anger, or depression before they come to accept their loss. Regarding losses other than death, missionaries may carry a load of unexpressed, unresolved grief.

More important than the “objective” severity of the loss is each person’s own interpretation of the loss. Leaving a pet may seem like a minor event to most people, but those who have had that pet for years may experience much grief. Here are several losses that may increase grief for missionaries.

Things?

Everyone understands the loss of friends and family, but what about the house, the car, the supermarket, the school, the pets, the newspaper, and the toys? All of these, and more, are lost as you leave your passport country to become missionaries. Any, or all, may cause grief.

You may develop two homes, one in your passport country and one on the field. When you come “home,” people there cannot understand that you feel the loss of the smells, the foods, the animals, the friendliness of the people, and the music of the country where you have been serving. Losing these may cause grief when you return to your passport country.

Transfers?

Headquarters calls, and you move to another field. You lose everything you have come to love over the last months or years. Grief comes again. Perhaps this culture has become home to your teens, and when you move to the new field, your older adolescents remain with other missionaries to finish school. They may be old enough to marry a national and stay behind forever—another loss and more grief.

The field committee asks you to take over a project that has not been handled well by another missionary. However, that means leaving what you have been doing so effectively—another loss. Your new project does not take off and the one you left also declines—more grief.

Transitions?

You knew that being a missionary would mean moving even more often than other people do in our mobile culture. Built into long-term missionary life are usually at least two moves every five years, four years on the field and one at home. In addition are the countless moves to different fields, to different places on the same

field, to different states on home assignment, etc. The list of transitions seems endless.

People sometimes say IBM means “I’ve Been Moved.” In the same way, MAF may seem to mean “Move Again, Friend,” or WGM may seem to mean “We’ve Gotta Move.” Missionaries are always saying good-bye, multiple good-byes to people, places, possessions and pets—grieving for all.

The hardest transitions seem to be premature departures. How do you say goodbye when you don’t want to leave? What if there has been a moral lapse? What if you have not been able to stand up under the emotional strain? What if headquarters just said to leave your assignment or to leave the mission? What if you are leaving in an evacuation? More grief.

Travel?

Travel is exciting to many people, but to missionaries on deputation, it can be dreary. You have been away from home for several years on the field, and now you are away even more. When overseas you could not get home for the funeral of a friend (no money, no flight available, no time free), but now that you are at home, you cannot get back to the field for a funeral there—unresolved grief in both cases.

Before airplanes, travel time was a time to work through the loss, through grief. It took at least days, if not weeks, to get from country to country whether traveling by ship, train, or horse-drawn vehicle. Today missionaries finish packing, step onto the plane, and in a few hours are at their destination. They have had no time to work through the loss.

Time?

That brings us to the time it takes to grieve. Grieving rituals are different in different cultures, so grief is expected to take different times in each. Grieving always takes time, sometimes much time. It may take a few days for leaving things, weeks for leaving friends, and

months for the death of a loved one. Some people say that such bereavement should be over in a couple months, but it often takes much longer. Those who try to short-circuit the grieving process may experience problems years later.

Triggers?

Long after your time of grieving seems to be over, you may suddenly feel the loss intensely again. “Triggers” (stimuli that bring back memories of the lost person, place, or thing) surprise you by suddenly reactivating the grief. You may not even realize that you saw, heard, or smelled something that brought back memories of the loss. Smell is especially likely to do this, and you will not even know why you thought of that person, place, possession or pet.

Anniversaries are particularly difficult, especially wedding anniversaries. Birthday anniversaries are another difficult time. “First’s” are also difficult, such as the first Christmas or first family reunion. Related events in others’ lives may be difficult, such as the birth of a friend’s child bringing back the loss of your own—years later, when you thought the grief was gone.

Trauma?

Missionaries may be more likely to experience traumatic situations. Other cultures may be more likely to have assault, political unrest, evacuations, bombings, killings, kidnappings, and so forth. When this happens to a missionary, others also become involved, and rightly so. Even though they did not experience the trauma firsthand, those helping also often grieve over the loss caused by the trauma.

Theology?

When a people in business get moved, they blame the company. When people in the military get moved, they blame the government. When missionaries get moved, they may blame not only administrators at headquarters, but also God himself. After all people

have prayed about the move and have determined that it is God’s will. God called us, he made us move, and it is his fault. Naomi’s statements about God in Ruth 1:20-21 are excellent examples. Returning missionaries may feel just as she did.

What can we do about it?

- Be honest. The loss and grief you experience is real. Do not deny it; it really hurts. Do not over spiritualize it and say what a privilege it is to suffer for Jesus, if it is not. Be honest and open about your feelings of loss.
- Be informed. Reading this brochure and other material about grief helps you become informed. Realize that all of these “Ts” are especially relevant to missionaries.
- Be Christian. Too often Christians deny their feelings of grief. They may quote 1 Thessalonians 4:13 as saying that we are not “to grieve like the rest of men.” Do not stop there because the rest of the verse is “who have no hope.” We grieve, but like people who have hope. Look at what the Bible says:
 - Abraham grieved. Genesis 23:2
 - Jacob grieved. Genesis 37:35
 - David grieved. 2 Samuel 18:33
 - Jesus grieved. John 11:35. “Jesus wept” is one of the shortest but most important verses in the Bible. If he wept at the funeral of a friend, we certainly can grieve about our losses.
 - Be missionaries. We have an excellent example of people saying good-bye to missionaries in Acts 20:17-21:1. Paul talked extensively about his leaving them, and then beginning in verse 36, note what they did:
 - They said their good-byes.
 - They knelt.
 - They prayed.
 - They wept.
 - They embraced.
 - They kissed.

- They went to the ship.
- They tore themselves away.

This is a good example of the grief expressed at the parting of a missionary. Paul had ministered to them two years, and such grief is normal and expected. If you do not express the grief over your losses, it may remain unresolved and return to hinder your work. Be honest informed Christian missionaries relative to your loss and grief.

21

...about Guilt

Lately you have been feeling guilty, but are not sure why. People are suffering. They are dying without Christ. Your work seems to make little difference. You are having difficulty maintaining a consistent devotional life. You just feel guilty about so many things that it is interfering with your work. You begin to wonder if you are guilty. Why do you feel so guilty? Isn't guilt bad? What can you do about feeling so guilty? What if the feelings don't go away? Let us consider some of these questions.

Am I guilty?

This is the crucial question. All possible combinations of guilt and guilt feelings are possible. You may be guilty and not feel guilty, you may feel guilty and not be guilty, or you may be guilty and feel guilty. Any one of these is likely to interfere with your work as a missionary. You want to reach the place where you are not guilty and do not feel guilty.

The Bible says much about being guilty. A look in a concordance at "guilt" and "guilty" will reveal dozens of verses about being guilty of sin. When you break one of God's commands, you are guilty—whether you feel guilty or not. If you are guilty, something needs to be done about the guilt, and we will discuss that later.

Why do I feel so guilty?

Of course, you may feel guilty because you are guilty, and that is good. Although the Bible says much about *being* guilty, it says little about *feeling* guilty. If you feel guilty because you are guilty, you just need to do something about the sin. However, many people feel guilty without being guilty. In fact, the guilt feelings may even be *stronger* when there is no guilt. Here are a few examples of things other than sin that may produce guilt feelings:

- Falling short of your own expectations. This often happens during the first term, especially for perfectionists.
- Falling short of other's expectations. Your church, your family, headquarters, and field director may expect more of you than you can possibly do.
- Not forgiving yourself. After God has forgiven your sin, you may not be able to forgive yourself even though your guilt is gone.
- Guilt trips by other people. Martha tried to "lay a guilt trip" on Mary for not working hard enough in Luke 10, and she even tried to get Jesus to join her.
- Oversensitive conscience. A good conscience will produce guilt when you sin; however, part of your conscience is learned in your culture, and you may feel guilty for many things that have nothing to do with sin.
- Survivor guilt. You may have gone through a traumatic situation and may feel guilty that you survived when others did not, or feel guilty about what you had to do to survive.
- Satan himself. Remember that Satan is the "accuser of the brothers" in 1 Peter 5 and Revelation 12. His accusations can make you feel guilty.
- Temptation. Although we are never promised that we will be beyond temptation, missionaries may feel guilty for being tempted to lie, cheat, or be sexually unfaithful.

Shame, rather than guilt, often brings on these guilt feelings. Guilt means that you have broken God's command, fallen short of his expectations. Shame means that you have fallen short of the expectations of someone other than God. It may have begun when

you walked through a mud puddle, soiling your new shoes. Your parents said, "Shame on you, you should have known better." Perhaps there was no way for you to have known, and the Bible does not forbid walking in puddles, but you felt guilty.

Isn't guilt bad?

Of course it is. That's a major goal of missions, to tell people in other cultures that God has solved the sin problem.

Aren't guilt feelings bad too? They may or may not be. If they are caused by things other than sin, such as some of the examples given in the previous section, they are also bad. They will interfere with the missionary's goal of telling others the good news.

Guilt feelings as a result of sin are good. These guilt feelings provide motivation for doing something about the sin in your life. Without them people seldom come to Christ, and often have great difficulty in society, perhaps becoming antisocial personalities (psychopaths) and getting into serious legal trouble. Such guilt feelings tend to be strongest immediately after sin is committed, then to decrease as rationalizations are generated. You then no longer feel the guilt, at least not nearly as much, and your "heart is hardened," making you much less likely to do something about the sin.

Are guilt feelings worse for missionaries?

Guilt feelings may be worse for missionaries because of some special situations.

- Living standards. Some missionaries live quite affluently compared to the people they minister to, and may feel guilty about their wealth. This is becoming less so as missionaries go to large cities.
- Suffering. Many of the people missionaries work with are suffering compared to Western standards, and all their needs simply cannot be met.

- Children's education. Although MKs do better academically than non-MKs "back home," missionaries may feel like they are not providing an adequate education.
- Aging parents. Since missionaries are out of their home country and do not have large financial resources, they may feel guilty about not caring for aging parents.
- Civil authorities. How can a missionary get anything done in a society where the local value system may conflict with that of the missionary? For example, what is the difference between a gratuity and a bribe?

People in their own cultures often have problems dealing with their affluence, the suffering of others, their children's education, their aging parents, and their government, so the difference is one of degree, not of kind.

What can I do about guilt?

The natural response to realizing you are guilty is to try to hide or rationalize, such as Adam and Eve did. However, that will not solve the problem. Missionaries are familiar with what to do about sin, but here is a review of the steps.

- Confession. Certainly confess your sins to God. You may also want to confess to people you have harmed as well. Confession usually should be only to those actually affected by the sin rather than to the general public.
- Repentance. Repentance is more than being sorry for your sins; it is a change of purpose or a change of mind. We are to turn from our sinful ways to God. After forgiving her, Jesus told the woman taken in adultery to sin no more.
- Faith. Christ paid the penalty for our sins, and we must trust him for this.
- Restitution. As far as possible, try to make right the wrong you have done. If you have stolen something, you can usually return it. Of course, if you have destroyed another's reputation, you may not be able to rebuild it.

What can I do about guilt feelings?

That depends on the cause. If the guilt feelings are because of sin, follow the steps reviewed above. If the guilt feelings are because of other factors, you need to deal with each one individually. Let's consider a couple of examples.

First-term missionaries often have very high expectations about what they will accomplish and feel guilty that they do not achieve their personal goals. In this case, they need to talk with an experienced missionary and set more realistic goals. Of course, they may still not lower their expectations, thinking that they are different, that their ministry will be more effective.

If the goals set for you by others are too high, ask to have them lowered. One teacher felt guilty for not spending the required number of minutes on each subject until she realized that the required number of minutes each day was an hour and twenty minutes longer than she had the children in class. The principal lowered the number of required minutes.

What if the guilt feelings don't go away?

Guilt feelings that you have had for a long time as a result of sin may become conditioned responses and remain even after the sin is forgiven. Just as Pavlov's dogs salivated to the sound of a bell, so you may feel guilty when some event triggers the guilt feelings, even after the sin is forgiven and the guilt itself is gone. These responses gradually decrease and stop over time.

If they do not go away, you may need to talk with your pastor or a counselor about why they are still there. You may have hidden things under layer after layer of rationalization and may need someone else to help you sort it all out.

A related question is how to lead a consistent Christian life to keep from becoming guilty again. Two things are very important. First, maintain a consistent daily devotional life. Missionaries report that this is their most difficult "spiritual" activity. Second, get into an accountability relationship with others to check on each other weekly,

or at some other regular interval. Agree with the others, as to what you will hold each other accountable for, and give this meeting a high priority in your life. Include daily devotions in any accountability plan.

Christ died for our sins and there is no condemnation in Christ. There is no need to be hindered by guilt or guilt feelings.

22

...about Anger

When Jonah is mentioned, we usually think of his disobedience. In reality Jonah was a cross-cultural missionary whose ministry was incredibly successful. After some hesitation, he went into the large, important city where God had called him and preached the message God had given him. The people, including the king, responded by fasting, praying, and giving up their evil ways. However, instead of returning to his passport country with exciting reports of the salvation of 120,000 people, he sat down to pout.

Jonah's attitudes did not match his successful ministry. He became angry, and his anger generalized to many different categories of people and things.

- He was angry with the people group to whom God had called him to minister. It was an evil city, one which a fellow prophet had pointed out was filled with liars, killers, and thieves (Nahum 3:1). Jonah's anger had turned to hatred, and though he preached to them, he really wanted them destroyed because they had been so cruel to his people.
- He was angry with God. He said to God, "I knew it! That is why I didn't want to come in the first place. I knew that you were a loving, compassionate God who would forgive them!" God did not destroy the people as he had hoped; Jonah asked God to take his life; and then he went outside to city and sat down to see what would happen (4:1-5).

- He was angry with the vine when it withered and no longer gave him shade (4:6-9). If living today, he would be angry with the electricity when it went off, with the computer when it crashed, and with the car when it quit.

Like many people you know, perhaps including yourself, Jonah had a problem with anger. Let us consider whether or not anger is sinful, why we get angry, what we can do with the anger, and whether or not we can change people who make us angry.

Is anger sinful?

Some Christians maintain that if we are truly spiritual, we will never become angry, or never express it if we do. However, the Bible approves of anger in some instances, but with warnings about it. We must never forget that “anger” is only one letter away from “danger.” Even as Jonah was praying to God and mentioning his grace and compassion, he pointed out that God was slow to anger (4:2).

- Jesus was angry on occasion, but also warned about it. When people were watching him to see if they could accuse him of healing on the Sabbath, he “looked around at them in anger,” was distressed about their attitude, and went ahead and healed the man (Mark 3; 1-6). However, he also said that people angry at someone (perhaps without cause) were subject to judgment (Matthew 5:22).
- Both Old and New Testaments tell us, “In your anger, do not sin.” (Psalm 4:4; Ephesians 4:26). Paul tells the Ephesians to get over their anger soon, and continues on telling them to “get rid of all bitterness, rage, and anger” (4:31).
- Both Old and New Testaments point out the importance of being “slow to anger.” As noted above, Jonah said that God was slow to anger. James notes that we should be “quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry” if we want righteousness (James 1:19).

Anger is one of those things that may be sinful at some times and not at others, so we must be very careful of the danger of falling into sin when we become angry.

Why do we get angry?

Here are a few of the many reasons people become angry.

- Genetics. Just as some people are born with a predisposition toward depression (another emotion), some people may be born with a predisposition to respond with anger. Things that would be shrugged off by most people result in anger.
- Learning. Others see the expression of anger modeled inappropriately as they are growing up and/or are rewarded for angry behavior themselves, so they learn to respond with anger.
- Control. Still others have discovered that when they respond with anger, they can manipulate other people, so they use it as a means of control.
- Frustration. One of the responses to having something, or someone, keep us from getting what we want is anger.
- Injustice. Of course, most people have experienced anger being aroused when they perceive injustice being done, especially to someone for whom they care deeply.

What do we do with anger?

Cultures vary widely in their prescriptions for how to handle anger, and those prescriptions change with time and place.

- Suppression. From the time of Plato through the Puritans to the present, some people in western culture have said that you must suppress anger at all costs. You can control it; therefore you must control it. Living in silent submission changes nothing, and such people may progress to chronic bitterness—or occasionally even to a sudden outburst.
- Catharsis. Likewise, others have said that it is unhealthy for you to control your anger, so you should not be expected to control it. In fact, if you do control it, you may become physically ill or emotionally disturbed. If you just express your anger and get it out of your system, you will feel relieved and all will be OK. Phineas (Joshua 22:13-20) is a good example of this approach.

He was ready to go to war with the other tribes (reminiscent of his action in Numbers 25), and he launched into a “How could you, how could you” tirade. Unfortunately, research shows that expressing your anger may become a habit. Your relief is short-lived, and you become more likely to respond with rage in the future.

- Both. What is needed is neither complete suppression nor unbridled expression, but a controlled expression. Rather than the result being bitterness or rage, anger can result in appropriate confrontation. A good example of this is found in the answer to Phineas (Joshua 22:21-29) as shown in the next section.

What are some guidelines for expressing anger?

Phineas had unjustly accused the people of building another altar, displeasing God, and perhaps bringing destruction on everyone (Joshua 22). We do not know the name or names of the persons who answered him, but their principles can be expressed in a double acrostic of the English vowels AEIOU.

- **A:** Affirm the Almighty (v. 22). They began by declaring their allegiance to God. This means that the goal of pleasing God is one that both groups have in common.
- **E:** Explain your Excogitating (a big word for thinking that starts with an “E”) (vs. 23-29). They elaborate on their thinking to explain their motivations and intentions. They seem to overdo it and go through the explanation too many times, but often that is necessary if the other party is also upset.
- **I:** “I” messages (not “you” messages) on the Issue (vs. 23-29). Their presentation is done in the first person with “we,” “us,” and “our” (plural of “I”) occurring 21 times. They talked about their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, rather than pointing their fingers and saying, “You....” They also stuck to the issue of the memorial, rather than accusing Phineas and his group of offending God themselves by what they were doing.
- **O:** Open to being the Offender (v. 23). They also remained open to the possibility that they had done something wrong, “If we

have....” Remember, you may be the one in the wrong, and you may be the one who has to repent.

- **U:** Unity before Unanimity (v. 30-31). They were not trying to persuade Phineas and his group that their position was right, but really to get back into fellowship with them. It worked. Everyone was pleased, placated, and praised God.

How can we change people who make us angry?

You can’t change anyone else, but you can change yourself. The anger is yours, and only you can determine how you will react to what other people do. Your anger can serve you, or it can destroy you. Anger, like other emotions, involves your mind, your body, your spirit, and your behavior.

- **Mind.** Change how you perceive and interpret things. For example, instead of blaming the other person, consider how you have reacted inappropriately in similar situations in the past. For example, instead of thinking how bad the other person is, think about how his or her day may be going badly.
- **Body.** Learn some relaxation and cooling-off techniques that will calm your body down. For example, pause, take a few deep breaths, and intentionally relax the muscles you feel tensing throughout your body.
- **Spirit.** Missionaries, like other Christians, would know that things such as prayer, reading scripture, and meditation are spiritually uplifting, helpful with anger.
- **Behavior.** Learn new habits and skills to help you respond in an anger-producing situation. For example, instead of raising your voice, silently count to 10 (or 20, or whatever it takes). Instead of sulking or pouting, get some exercise by taking a walk or jog. Instead of arguing, engage in some enjoyable distraction (hobby, game, etc.) for a while.

We do not know if Jonah ever resolved his anger, but we do know that we do not have to leave our anger unresolved and become bitter as he did.

23

...about Sarcasm

Some people, including missionaries, believe that sarcastic remarks are cute, get a laugh, and do no harm. For example, they find that the following one-liners may bring laughter from a group.

- You don't have an inferiority complex: you really are inferior.
- Whatever is eating you must really be suffering.
- Talk is cheap, but that's OK. You are too.
- What you lack in intelligence you make up for in stupidity.

Such remarks may get a laugh, but they may also do harm. *Webster's Dictionary Unabridged* defines sarcasm as "a taunting, sneering, cutting, or caustic remark." The dictionary notes that the word comes from the Greek "*sarkasmos* from *sarkazein*, to tear flesh like dogs, to speak bitterly, from *sarx* flesh." Rather than tearing physical flesh, such remarks may tear emotional "flesh." Such emotional wounds may take far longer to heal than physical wounds.

Sarx appears more than 150 times in the New Testament and is usually translated as "flesh" or "fleshly." However, in about 10 places it is translated differently, and in those places the King James Version translated it as "carnal." Since carnal is seldom used today, some translations use other words. For example, the New International Version translates it as follows.

- Romans 7:14. "We know that the law is spiritual but I am unspiritual (*sarx*), sold as a slave to sin."
- Romans 8:7. "The sinful (*sarx*) mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so."

- 1 Corinthians 3:3. You are still worldly (*sarx*). For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly (*sarx*)?

This use in the Bible does not mean that everyone who makes a sarcastic remark is worldly, unspiritual, or sinful; however, it does mean that one must be very careful because such remarks may do harm. Here are some ways they may do so, and some ways to prevent that.

"Mean" Missionaries

Humor in another language is difficult to understand at best. Many times interpreters translate "jokes" as, "This guy just told a joke, and I don't have any idea what it is. Laugh heartily to make him feel good." Sarcastic remarks intended to be funny may be taken literally by nationals, as insulting and not as funny.

When nationals who know some English hear missionaries calling each other inferior, cheap, or stupid, they may think that they are insulting, mean, or cruel and lacking in respect for each other. If they do not pick up the changes in tone, they may think that such labels are acceptable for Christians.

These may be taken several ways, depending on who they hear using them.

- "They are the disrespectful ways Christians address each other"—If they are commonly used by people on a team.
- "They are the disrespectful ways that leaders address followers"—If they hear them from a leader.
- "They are the disrespectful ways spouses address each other"—If they hear both husbands and wives using them.

They may be confused as to how to reconcile the sarcastic remarks with Scripture that says to be kind and encouraging to each other.

"Misunderstood" Missionaries

Other missionary colleagues may misunderstand sarcastic remarks intended to be funny. This is especially true of multicultural

teams which are becoming much more common. Even if everyone on the team speaks English, some people on the team are using English as a second language. The principle for those team members is the same as for the nationals, they may not understand that they were said in jest.

In addition, even missionaries who all speak English as their first language may not understand that the sarcastic remark is meant to be funny. In one case, one person on a team misunderstood that the leader was just kidding. She never said anything but kept it bottled up for nearly a whole year. Near the end of the year she exploded about the kind of comments her leader had made repeatedly, much to her leader's surprise.

This is most likely to occur when a missionary feels especially insecure about something. For example, the following remarks may be fine for someone who knows they are intelligent.

- Are you always this dumb or are you trying harder today?
- I don't know what makes you so dumb, but it really works.
- If you were twice as smart as you are now, you'd still be stupid.

However, such remarks could be devastating to people who have doubts about their intellectual ability. They might laugh outwardly but be crying on the inside, and no one would realize how much they hurt.

“Milquetoast” Missionaries

Some of the other missionaries on the team may be uncomfortable with the sarcastic comments but say nothing.

- They may not want to cause relationship problems out of fear that the sarcastic remarks may increase.
- They may not want to cause dissention or awkwardness on a team that lives and works closely together.
- They may rationalize that this is just the way the person is and that he or she just will never change.
- They may decide that the remark is just a “picky” thing, not really a problem.

For whatever reason, these teammates say nothing, and the situation continues. This is especially likely if team leaders are the ones making the sarcastic remarks. Unfortunately, unless they are confronted, the situation is not likely to change, and some missionaries may leave the team because of the hurt.

“Merciful” Missionaries

Still other missionaries may say nothing because they want to be good, loving, understanding, and merciful. They are not afraid to say something, but they are reluctant to confront the sarcastic missionary because confrontation seems to be unloving, almost unchristian.

These missionaries seem to think that being loving means never saying negative things or anything that shows disapproval. They want to say only positive things that show approval. Of course, nearly everyone wants to be merciful, but we must remember that God balances mercy and justice.

“Misleading” Missionaries

Still other missionaries want to be liked and “laugh” at the sarcastic comments. When they do this, they reinforce the sarcastic behavior. Individuals making the remarks take this as a sign of approval, and are more likely to make the sarcastic remarks.

This means that the sarcastic individuals do not get appropriate feedback indicating that what they are doing may be hurting people. Silence gives consent, and laughter not only gives consent but also encourages the behavior.

“Mending” Missionaries

Fortunately some missionaries realize that a good way to help reduce the sarcastic remarks is to talk with the person about such remarks. Unfortunately, most missionaries do not like to confront other missionaries and would rather put up with something that makes

them very uncomfortable than confront a colleague. David Augsburger titled his book *Caring Enough to Confront*, emphasizing that confronting another person is a caring thing to do.

Ephesians 4-5 has several passages of Scripture relevant to confrontation.

- In Ephesians 4:15-16 Paul talks about “speaking the truth in love” so that we will all be joined together in him (Christ) so that Christ’s body “builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.”
- In Ephesians 4:29 Paul warns about unwholesome talk and about saying “only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs.”
- In Ephesians Paul also warns about filthiness, foolish talk, and crude joking “but instead let there be thanksgiving.”

Many other passages of Scripture also admonish us to encourage others.

- Genesis 50:21. Talking with his brothers who had sold him into slavery, Joseph “comforted them and spoke kindly to them.”
- In Isaiah 50:4 the prophet wanted to “know how to sustain with a word him who is weary.”
- In Colossians 4:5 Paul urged them to “let your speech always be gracious,” and in 1 Thessalonians 5:11, he said to “encourage one another and build each other up.”

Finally, sarcastic individuals can do two things that will help. First, they may stop using such remarks out of concern for making people stumble, either nationals or teammates. In 1 Corinthians 10:22, Paul urged us not to “cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God.”

Second, they may ask for feedback periodically to find out how others view them, making sure that what they are doing is not being misinterpreted. We all need people who care enough to tell us how we are viewed by others. This often occurs in accountability relationships, but any individual can ask another individual to do this relative to a specific issue, such as sarcastic remarks.

Again, just because people make some sarcastic remarks does not mean that they are evil. However, the individuals making the remarks, as well as teammates, must make sure that such remarks are

not interfering with ministry to nationals who do not understand that they are meant to be humorous, not insulting. They also must make sure they are not misinterpreted as fact by colleagues.

24

...about Sleep

(with Marty Seitz)

God's people from time to time have had difficulty sleeping. Through no fault of his own, **Job** experienced great stress and said, "I have been allotted months of futility, and nights of misery have been assigned to me. When I lie down I think, 'How long before I get up?' The night drags on, and I toss till dawn" (Job 4:13-14).

Even great political leaders like King **Darius** agonized over poor decisions that endangered his friends, and he found himself unable to eat or sleep (Daniel 6:18).

However Scripture has promises for good sleep, such as "When you lie down, you will not be afraid; when you lie down, your sleep will be sweet" (Proverbs 3:24). Another promise is, "I will lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety" (Psalm 4:8).

After receiving a message from God, the prophet **Jeremiah** awoke, looked around and said that his sleep had been pleasant to him (Jeremiah 31:26). **Our Lord** himself slept during a furious storm, much to the surprise of his disciples (Matthew 8:24).

Peter, early preacher and church leader, was sleeping between two soldiers bound with two chains with two sentries standing guard the night before he was to be brought to trial (Acts 12:6).

Yet, Christian workers may have difficulty sleeping at times; however, not all such difficulties are necessary. God may enable us to sleep at peace even in the most difficult circumstances.

How do I know if I have a sleep disorder?

Although **many kinds** of sleep disorders exist, the primary sleep disorders are those that involve problems in the amount, quality, or timing of sleep. When people sleep either too much or too little, the sleep they get does not leave them feeling rested. Or if they cannot sleep when they want to but fall asleep when they want to stay awake, they may have a sleep disorder.

With **primary insomnia** for at least a month people have difficulty falling asleep, staying asleep, or not feeling rested after sleep. They also feel distressed about not being able to sleep, or the lack of sleep impairs their functioning. Some people have the opposite problem, **excessive sleepiness**-- the problem of sleeping too much or at the wrong times for at least a month.

In this brochure we are concentrating primarily on helping people with insomnia so that they can get enough restful sleep during the time they want to sleep. Such people often become increasingly frustrated and distressed over their inability to sleep, and this makes them less and less able to get good sleep. Lying in bed for hours during sleepless nights, they find themselves falling asleep during worship services, or while reading, watching television, attending meetings, and even driving.

What can I do if I have a sleep disorder?

Ideally, to ensure that a change will not be detrimental to existing medical conditions or treatments, one ought to consult a medical professional before making any lifestyle change. If possible, such a professional should examine medical causes or implications of problems.

Remember that one crucial test of whether or not you have a sleep problem is whether or not you fall asleep during the day. The

“normal” eight hours of sleep is only an average and changes with your age and circumstances. You may need nine hours, or you may need only six hours. Also remember that waking up briefly or coming close to waking up about every hour and a half is normal. You may find the following suggestions helpful if you really have a disorder.

- Keep a **sleep log** for two weeks. Record
 - When you go to bed
 - How long it takes you to fall asleep
 - How often you wake up and when
 - The amount of time to get back to sleep
 - Time you finally get up to stay
 - How you feel when you get up
 - How sleepy you are during the day
 - When you take any naps and for how long
- Look for **patterns** in your sleep log.
 - Do you have trouble falling asleep initially?
 - Do you have trouble staying asleep?
 - Do you not feel rested and stay awake after a night’s sleep?
 - Find a suggestion in the following that will help solve the problem you discover in your log.
- Establish a **sleep routine**. The most important part of that routine is to get up at the same time each morning. The second most important is to do things in the same order and at the same time just before you go to bed each night.
- **Do not lie in bed** more than 15-20 minutes trying to get to sleep. Get up and do something boring and not physically taxing, such as polishing your shoes or even just cutting strips of paper. Then go to bed when you get drowsy. Repeat this as often as necessary.
- Do not use the bed for anything except sleep and sex. Do not read, watch TV, have devotions, etc. If you want to read, do so in a chair next to the bed, and get into bed when you get drowsy. You want your bed to be associated with sleep and rest, not with wakefulness and activity.
- Do not **exercise** vigorously within two hours of bedtime. Do exercise vigorously at some time during the day.

- **Reduce distractions** or annoyances, such as the nightly hassles of noises, light, etc. For example, if noises disturb you, wear earplugs; use a white noise generator (TV with screen covered and on a non-channel will do); or play tapes or CDs of environmental sounds such as waves, wind in the pines, etc.
- Avoid **caffeine** intake for the five hours before going to sleep. Avoid drinking much liquid within two hours of bedtime.
- Have a light snack of foods rich in **L-tryptophan**, such as a glass of milk or a turkey, peanut butter, or tuna sandwich.
- Do not do **serious thinking** at the end of the day just before you go to bed. Do it earlier so that you can relax before bedtime.
- If you are anxious at bedtime, consider **journaling** to get those anxious thoughts out of your head and onto paper.
- Plan for the next day if you are anxious about things coming up, as long as you do not become mentally stimulated.
- Sleep in comfortable conditions. **Temperature** is very important, and most people sleep best when the temperature is about 64-66 degrees, but you may be different—and being too warm is worse than being too cool. If spouses like different temperatures, get a dual control electric blanket or cut your blankets in half and sew them together with one light side and one heavy side. If all else fails, sleep in separate beds near each other.
- Get a good **pillow**, one that is comfortable for you, whether it is made of feathers, foam, or barley husks.
- Get a wool or **fleece** mattress pad which aids sleep for many.
- **Pray** at night to turn everything over to God. Ask him for sleep.
- **Ask other people** to pray for your sleep problem.
- Make **confession** a part of your nightly prayers if you keep thinking about your shortcomings. Pray for **protection** during the night if you have fears about that.
- Attend a **healing service**.
- Take a warm (not hot) **bath** 10-15 minutes before going to bed.
- **Herbal supplements** such as Valerian (root), Kava Kava, or herbal teas may help.

- **Over-the-counter** antihistamines such as Benadryl may help, though Benadryl may have a “hangover” effect.
- Remember that “weird” **dreams** are normal. Most people have dreams that just do not make any sense, and they wonder where the dreams came from.
- If **nightmares** are a problem, write them down and add a happy, redemptive, resolving ending. Ask Christ to come into that dream and deal with it.
- Get a **massage** to relax if you have a partner who does it well and if it does not always lead to sex. Massaging your own scalp may be relaxing.
- Use relaxation techniques of stretching, breathing, and imagining one of your favorite places as described in our anxiety brochure.
- Check your medications to see if they have **side effects** that interfere with sleep. Your physician or pharmacist can give you that information, or you may have noticed that your sleep problem started when you began a new medication.
- Paint your bedroom a **soothing pastel** such as dusty rose or powder blue since bright colors tend to agitate.
- Use your imagination to create relaxing scenes.
- Read **books** about getting a good sleep such as *67 Ways to Good Sleep* written by Charles Inlander and Cynthia Moran.
- Find information about sleep disorders on the **Internet** at sites such as the one maintained by the National Library of Medicine at www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/sleepdisorders.html or the one maintained by the National Sleep Foundation at <http://www.sleepfoundation.org/>. These web sites have numerous links to reliable information about sleep disorders. (Remember that the domains .gov and .edu tend to be the most reliable.)
- If you want to listen to **music**, use soothing instrumental music rather than vocal music.
- Turn your **clock** around so that you cannot see the time during the night if you are a “clock watcher.”
- Avoid **naps** unless they are helpful. See if you can go for a week without napping. If you are sleeping better, stop napping

- permanently. If not, resume naps, but keep them to 20 minutes or less.
- Find a **comfortable position** in which to sleep. Many people find lying on their side with a pillow between their knees keeps their body in best alignment.
 - Limit prescription **sleeping pills**. They can be helpful in times of particular difficulty, but regular use may be addictive and actually increase your sleep problems.
 - Be sure you get enough vitamin B, calcium, magnesium, iron and copper.
 - Avoid cheeses, yogurt, sour cream, processed meat, eggplant, potatoes, spinach, and tomatoes before sleep. They contain **tyrosine**, which can interfere with sleep.
 - Avoid spicy, sugary, and/or high protein (except for those rich in L-tryptophan) foods several hours before bedtime.
 - Do not use the bedroom as a study or **battleground** where you have emotionally or intellectually stimulating discussions.
 - **Decorate the bedroom** with images associated with sleep or relaxation, such a sunset over the ocean, a cabin in the woods, a stream, or a sunny beach.
 - If your problem is a **snoring** person nearby, try sewing a tennis ball on the back of his or her nightshirt making lying on the back impossible. People tend to snore less if they sleep on their sides.

You may not be able to do all of these things, and none of them work for everyone. However, all of them have helped some people, and one or more of them may be just what you need to get a good night’s sleep.

25

...about Loneliness

Lately you have been feeling “invisible.” It seems like everyone else has friends, but you are just “in” the crowd—not “of” the crowd. You feel empty, disconnected, and alienated from those around you—socially inadequate, socially unskilled. You are anxious and sad but feel like no one else knows how miserable and isolated you are. You feel empty and hollow, like you are separated from the rest of the world.

People around you are friendly and greet you with a smile. However, you find it difficult, seemingly impossible, to have any really meaningful interaction with others. You would like to meet new people and make deep friendships, but you just can’t bring yourself to take part in social activities to make friends.

Feeling unloved and unwanted, you are lonely. But how could you be lonely when there are people all around you? Isn’t God always with you so that you will not be lonely? Can cross-cultural workers be lonely? What can you do?

How can I be lonely?

You are certainly not alone if you live in a city of millions of people. However, loneliness has nothing to do with being alone; it has to do with relationships. If you live in a village of a hundred people, you are much less likely to be lonely than if you live in a city of a million people. You are likely to know the names of everyone

you meet in that village, but you may never meet anyone you know in that city.

Many people choose to be alone, to experience solitude, and they find it a positive, pleasurable, enriching time. Loneliness is essentially unwilling solitude, wanting to be in relationship with others but not experiencing it. “Forced solitude,” solitary confinement, is one of the most terrible punishments used on people in prison.

You may be relatively new to the culture in which you live so that you find it difficult to have meaningful relationships with the nationals. You have not yet internalized enough of the culture to feel at ease with close relationships in it. Or you may have been in that culture for many years, even the leader of your group, and still be lonely. Being the leader changes your relationships with everyone in the group and it is “lonely at the top.”

Can God’s people be lonely?

You may think, “Isn’t God with me everywhere? I’m part of the family of God so how can I be lonely?” God is with you everywhere, but you need human relationships as well. You are part God’s family, but you may still not have the deep friendships you desire with other members of his family. You can still be lonely. Here are some examples.

- Adam. Even before sin entered humanity, God noted that it was not good for Adam to be alone, so God created Eve as a companion with whom Adam could be in relationship (Genesis 2).
- David. In the Psalms David said, “My friends and companions avoid me...my neighbors stay far away” (31:11), and “look to my right and see; no one is concerned for me” (142:4).
- Elijah. While deeply discouraged just after a great spiritual victory, Elijah said, “I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too” (1 Kings 19:10, 14).
- Jesus said, “You will leave me all alone. Yet I am not alone, for my Father is with me (John 16:32). Only hours later even the

Father was gone, and Jesus said, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46).

Do other cross-cultural workers feel this way?

Everyone feels lonely at times, and cross-cultural workers are no exception. Living in a strange culture away from family and friends, most people feel lonely.

Near the end of his second letter to Timothy, Paul (a veteran cross-cultural worker) wrote about several things that made him feel lonely.

- Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me (2 Timothy 4:10).
- Crescens has gone to Galatia (2 Timothy 4:10).
- Titus (has gone) to Dalmatia (2 Timothy 4:10).
- At my first defense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me (2 Timothy 4:16).
- Do your best to get here before winter (2 Timothy 4:21).

Paul was so lonely that he even asked Timothy to bring Mark, a man who had deserted Paul and Barnabas years before. Paul had held this desertion against Mark many years and would not even let Mark go with him on his second term of cross-cultural service.

Lonely now, Paul said:

- Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry (2 Timothy 4:11).

What causes loneliness?

Loneliness is common because it has so many causes. These causes may be found in your situation or within you. Here are some possible causes.

- Your moving. Part of being a cross-cultural worker is moving from one place to another, either reentering your passport culture repeatedly or moving from one culture to another.
- Friends moving. If you do not move, other people from your agency are likely to. Expatriates are constantly on the move.

- Away from family and friends. Part of working cross-culturally is living in a place far from acquaintances in your past.
- Expectations not met. Perhaps you had heard how friendly people were in your host culture, but you find them quite distant.
- Rejected. You may not be accepted by the people you came to serve and feel rejected even by people serving in your agency.
- Discriminated against. You came to serve, but you find that political or social forces in your host country discriminate against you because of your passport country, your race, or your religion.
- Surface relationships. 1. You long to share deeply with others, but you are not able to find anyone in your agency or in your host culture who wants to do so.
- Surface relationships. 2. You do not want to become too close to anyone because you know that either they or you will be moving soon.
- Lack of social skills. You do not understand how to interact well in your host culture—or maybe your passport one.
- Self-conscious or shy. Having low self-esteem or lack of self-confidence. You find it difficult to get close to anyone in any culture.
- Anxiety, depression, feelings of worthlessness or social phobias. Personal problems in adjustment prevent you from interacting adequately with other expats or nationals.
- Fear of rejection. You had some intimate friends, but they turned on you so that you now fear it will happen again.
- The city feels so unfriendly. You grew up in a farming community or small town, and the large city in which you serve has no similar sense of community.

What can I do to get over loneliness?

The good news about loneliness is that you CAN take steps yourself to get over it. It is the only “disorder” that can be cured by adding two or more cases together! However, the more lonely you feel, the harder it is to take the steps needed, so remember that it takes

time, effort, and commitment. You may need the help of a counselor to begin to take those steps.

Basically what you want to do is to find the cause (perhaps from the ones listed above) and then do things to counteract that cause. You may have to make changes in your situation or changes in yourself. Do not wait for your feelings of loneliness to go away—act first, and the change in feelings will come later. Here are some suggestions.

- Look for ways to get involved with people around you, such as eating with them, sitting near them, exercising with them.
- Put yourself in situations where you will meet new people, such as joining a club, attending a new church and doing volunteer work with others.
- Develop your social skills, practice getting to know others, and become vulnerable enough to let people know you.
- Do not assume new relationships will be the same as old ones. Look at each new person from a new perspective.
- Respond to others and their interests, but do not pretend to be interested in something you are not. People will sense that.
- Go do things you like to do even if you have to go alone. Attending a concert or film, even taking a walk you may meet someone with similar interests.
- Being a friend or helping someone may result in a deeper relationship.
- Take a class in an area of interest. You may meet someone with similar interests.
- Ask people about themselves because people usually want to share with someone who is interested in them.

A word of caution!

Modern communication technology, such as e-mail, instant messaging, webcams, VoIP, and low international phone rates has resulted in some people becoming so interested in maintaining old relationships that they fail to build new ones.

These distant relationships may make us think that we do not need intimate face-to-face relationships. This is not the case. Even though you may be able to hear and even see the person, it is not the same as interacting with a real person.

Trying to maintain such a relationship is often not satisfying and may result in not developing adequate relationships with others.

26

...about Memory

Art asked Ron to loan him a book. When Ron asked to look something up in the borrowed book, Art told Ron that he had placed it in his mailbox in the central office. Art said that he could “see” his hand placing it in the box. Ron let it go at that, knowing that the book would probably turn up because his name was written in it. A few days later when he entered Art’s office, Ron noticed the book sitting on top of Art’s filing cabinet. How could that be?

Chris taught in the local international school, and she taught several different grades during her decade of service. When a new administration came to the school, she was not happy, especially with the new principal. She did not say anything in public, but she voiced her increasing disappointment with the school repeatedly to her closest friends and asked to change to a different type of service, one with national women in the church. Over time most of her friends transferred to different fields. A decade later, while catching up with one of her friends, Chris mentioned how wonderful the school was and how she had enjoyed her time teaching there. How could that be?

These situations can be explained by considering the nature of memory. During the last half of the 20th century neuropsychologists found that previously accepted concepts of memory may be wrong.

Classical view of memory

Early experiments on memory showed that when individuals learned a fact or had an experience, most of the forgetting took place during the first few hours or days, a time called the consolidation period. When

this period ended most psychologists assumed that the memories remaining were stable and permanent. They thought these memories remained unchanged for unlimited periods.

Such memories can be thought of as something like the books in one’s book cases, books which can be opened and read, and perhaps even highlighted. Then the book can be placed back on the shelf with the original material unchanged. The next time a person takes the book off the shelf the material in the book is the same as it was previously.

Current view of memory

During the 1960s neuropsychologists found that these memories do not always remain unchanged. They could literally see that neural connections in the hippocampus of the brain could be changed each time those memories were brought into consciousness. Unfortunately, the classical view was so widely held that these findings were largely ignored. However, around the turn of the century, people began to accept these new facts.

Apparently any time an old (consolidated) memory is recalled, it may become open again to changes and additions so that the original memory actually changes. Of course, it can go through reconsolidation again and again changing some each time

From this view memories are like files saved in a computer. They can be opened, read, and if they are changed, they can be saved again in that changed form. The changes then become part of the document, and the original form is gone. The memory itself is different, and even the author does not have the original.

Each time the memory is recalled, it may be changed a bit until the reconsolidated memory is quite different from the original one.

False Memories

In their research on memory psychologists have created false memories of events that never happened, such as adding an event in a person’s childhood, getting lost in a mall, or even being attacked by a dog. Although the event never occurred, people believe it did and recall details of what happened and how they felt.

False memories occur in real life as well. A woman identified psychologist Donald Thompson as the man who raped her. However,

Thompson was on a live TV show at the time of the rape. Apparently the woman was watching him on TV just before the attack occurred, and associated Thompson's face with the rape.

Art, in the first paragraph, probably had planned to put Ron's book in his box in the office then confused that thought with an actual event creating a false memory.

Modified Memories

As noted in the current view of memory, whenever an existing memory is brought into consciousness, it may be modified before it is reconsolidated. A familiar example is a fisherman describing the fish that got away. Each time he tells the story showing the length of the fish between his hands, the fish gets longer. Is he lying?

When Hillary Clinton visited Bosnia in 1996, she and others emerged from the plane. A decade later after repeatedly telling the story, she recalled running off the plane under sniper fire. However, 2008 news footage of the event showed her and other passengers smiling as they walked off the plane. She may have been worried about sniper fire at the time, or she may have confused it with another event, and it became part of this memory. Of course, she may just have lied. A similar incident occurred with newscaster Brian Williams who saw a helicopter shot down in Iraq in 2003. By 2007 he said his helicopter was under fire, and by 2013 he said his helicopter was shot down. Either he lied or his memory was modified when recalled.

In the second introductory example Chris modified her memory of teaching at the school. When parents of her former students thanked her for what she had done for their children and her former students also expressed their gratitude, those events became part of her memory and made the memory of teaching much more positive.

Metamemory

Metamemory refers to what people know or believe about their own memories. Most people, including missionaries, believe that their memories do not change over time and that their memories are correct. They often think that, after all, they were there when events occurred so they certainly saw and heard what happened. They have vivid memories of what they

personally experienced, but they may not understand that the memories have changed.

What does the Bible say?

The Bible is not silent on the subject of memory. In fact, when people look at a concordance or search a digital file for a given word, they find hundreds of verses about words related to memory.

The word "memory" comes from the Latin word *memor*, and it is the root of memorable, memorial, memories, remember, remembrance, remind, reminder, and other similar words in modern translations.

The Old Testament is filled with different Hebrew words commanding the Israelites not to forget their heritage through people such as Abraham, prophets such as Isaiah, and kings such as David.

Likewise, in the Greek New Testament gospels Jesus urges the apostles to remember their Old Testament history as well as events recorded Acts and the epistles.

In Luke 22:19 Jesus told the apostles to take communion to remember him, and ended by saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me." Then in 1 Corinthians 11:23-25 Paul repeated Jesus.

An extended passage on memory is in 2 Peter 1:12-15, "So I will always **remind** you of these things....I think it is right to **refresh your memory** as long as I live in the tent of this body....And I will make every effort to see that after my departure you will always be able to **remember** these things."

Implications

Two missionaries who believe that their memories are unchanging and who both believe that their own memory is correct are likely to, at some time, find differences between what they "remember." Fortunately, this usually involves minor things such as the color they chose for paint or the route they were going to follow. However, it may also involve important issues such as the availability of car seats for children or differences in salary to be paid. These cases may lead to misunderstanding and conflict.

Believing that their own memories are correct, either or both missionaries may come to the conclusion that the other is lying. This may occur between missionaries from the same culture and may be even more

likely on multicultural teams or between missionaries and the nationals they serve. Having different memories does not mean that either is lying. Such differences may occur because of a misunderstanding at the time the memory was formed or because memories of either or both may have changed over time. Discussing the differences is far better than confrontation.

Missionaries need to give each other the benefit of the doubt when differences occur. They must remind themselves that different memories may be formed during the event, or they may occur over time as they recall the original memories in different situations. In fact, field directors' memories may change more than those of persons they lead because similar situations may occur repeatedly so field directors have more opportunities to modify their memories. The following suggestions may be helpful in preventing misunderstandings.

- Put things in writing and give copies to all individuals involved.
 - Taking pictures of people present is easy with smart phones.
 - Take videos of the events.
 - All keep personal journals of activities and decisions reached.
- Finally, all missionaries who have to raise funds or prayer partners when on home ministry assignments need to realize that, unless they have their presentations memorized and never change, their stories may change. Each time they think about an event they may change their own memories of that event.

Part 3.

Challenges That May Become Problems

Some challenges become serious problems. Wanting to please God, some of the most committed missionaries burn out and wind up returning to their passport country never to return to the host country again. The chapter about burnout may help prevent that. Anxiety and depression are so common and may become so serious that I have devoted two chapters to each of them, giving many ways that may help decrease each.

Praying daily for the persecuted church in many parts of the world makes us more aware that the world is very hostile to Christians. Acts of terror get much publicity when they are dramatic, but missionaries may face other traumatic situations, feeling very much alone in a different culture. The chapter about trauma may help missionaries debrief one another in order to prevent the long-lasting Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

27

...about Suffering

As you think about some of your fellow missionaries, you realize that many of them are suffering greatly.

- One man has been in constant physical pain for years because of a problem with his back.
- A woman had a small fortune when she came to serve, but poor financial decisions by friends back home have left her virtually penniless.
- One couple worries constantly about their wayward son who is living as a street person back in their passport country.
- Another couple receives many heart-rending e-mails from their daughter living with a man to whom she is not married.
- Yet another couple cannot forgive themselves because their teenage daughter was molested by a national years ago.
- After nearly two decades of service, a missionary family sees its influence nearly wiped out when a cult comes in.

The list could go on and on. How could it be that faithful missionaries could suffer so much physically, emotionally, financially, and so forth? They have been faithful in their service. It seems like God just does not care. Where is God anyway? God rewards his children, doesn't he? Does he keep his promises?

What's going on?

The problem is that we have many "Christian" cultural beliefs that are not true.

- God builds a hedge of protection around his people so they will not suffer.
- If we live in God's will, we won't suffer.
- Suffering means we have sinned.
- Suffering has no positive results.
- We have no joy if we suffer.
- If God really loves us, he will not let us suffer.
- God punishes us with suffering.

Again this list could go on and on. A much longer list appears in the comments of Job's "friends" in chapters 4-37. Job's comments in those chapters showed that he did not understand what was going on, but he was sure his friends did not know either. Let us look at what Jesus himself told those who were following him.

What did Jesus say?

When his disciples asked Jesus what it would be like for His people near the end of time, Jesus listed much suffering (Matthew 24, John 15-16).

- Famines
- Earthquakes
- Persecution
- Death
- Hatred by all nations
- Betrayal by people who left the faith
- Hatred by people who left the faith
- Killings by people who believe they are serving God as they kill

Jesus went on to tell the disciples that he told them about these things so that when they actually came they would remember that he had warned them (John 16:4). We should not be surprised when we suffer.

More specifically, he told his twelve disciples what it would be like when they went out to serve. He told them they would experience the following (Matthew 10):

- Be handed over to local councils
- Be flogged in synagogues
- Be arrested
- Be betrayed by family members
- Be killed
- Be hated by “everyone”

What happened to Paul?

We can read not only about Jesus warning but also about what actually happened to Paul, an early cross-cultural worker. Paul actually listed his sufferings in 2 Corinthians 11).

- 39 lashes from the Jews (5 times)
- Beaten with rods (3 times)
- Shipwrecked (3 times)
- Imprisoned
- Stoned
- Hungry, thirsty, and cold
- Labor, toil, and sleeplessness
- In danger from rivers, bandits, false brothers, people from passport country as well as nationals.
- In danger in the city, in the country, and at sea.

Cross-cultural workers today experience similar suffering, although they are more likely to be in airplane crashes than shipwrecks.

Do we have to suffer?

During his first term of cross-cultural service, to encourage and strengthen people, Paul told them, “We must suffer...” (Acts 14:22). Why would we have to suffer? Sometimes suffering is the only way to reach a particular goal. For example, most people have

experienced getting a splinter in their hand or foot. This frequently happens during childhood, and children often want to leave the splinter in rather than suffering as the parents remove it.

However, the parents *know that* if the splinter remains, it will become infected and may turn into a serious problem. The parents also *know that* the only way to get the splinter out is to dig it out. Assuming that the parents do not take every splinter to a physician where anesthesia is available, removing the splinter causes some suffering as it is removed.

Why would anyone rejoice in suffering?

The answer is in the “know that” phrase which is in italics in the paragraph above. When you “know that” your suffering is the way to develop particular traits, you can rejoice as you consider the goal.

James wrote that we should “consider it pure joy” when we face trials because *we know that* this leads to perseverance, which then leads to maturity (James 1:2-4). It is not that we enjoy the suffering, but we rejoice because *we know that* we are moving toward maturity.

Romans 5:3-4 states, “Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because *we know that* suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.” Again, our joy comes not from the suffering itself, but we rejoice because *we know that* we are moving toward character and hope.

It also helps to *know that* we are not alone in our suffering. Peter, a third culture kid, tells us to stand firm “because you *know that* your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings” (1 Peter 5:9). You are not alone, Christians all over the world experience similar sufferings as they develop perseverance, character, hope and maturity.

Does suffering always lead to perseverance, character, hope and maturity?

It can lead to these characteristics, but it does not always do so. Suffering may result in people becoming either better or bitter, depending on how they respond to it. The writer of Hebrews points out that God, our heavenly father, disciplines (not punishes) us like our earthly parents do (Hebrews 12). Just as people differ in their response to their parent's discipline when they are children, so do people differ in their response to God's discipline when they are adults.

The writer of Hebrews encourages us to endure hardship as discipline and notes that everyone experiences discipline. Our earthly parents do what *seems* best to them, but our heavenly father does what *is* best for us. "God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace" (Hebrews 12:10-11).

Each of us chooses whether or not to accept God's discipline gracefully (Psalm 119:71) to develop perseverance, character, hope, maturity, righteousness, and peace or to reject his discipline and become bitter toward him and about life in general. We choose whether to become better or to become bitter.

How do I respond while suffering?

Most of the information above is cognitive in nature, and it is important for you to think on these things. Likewise, it is important for you to watch what you say to yourself, your self-talk. Talking to yourself about God takes your eyes off your problems and focuses them on God. The Psalms have many good examples of such self-talk.

- "Why are you downcast, O my soul?..." (Psalm 42:5)
- "Find rest, O my soul, in God alone...." (Psalm 62:5)

In addition, you must be honest about the emotions you feel. Jesus was in Mark 14:33-34, Matthew, 26:38, and Luke 12:50).

- "deeply distressed and troubled"

- "overwhelmed with sorrow"
Likewise, Paul was honest about his emotional reactions.
- "great distress and anguish of heart and with many tears" (2 Corinthians 2:4)
- "anxiety" (Philippians 2:28)
- "fear" (2 Corinthians 7:5, 12:20)

King David, no stranger to suffering, wrote about these same emotional responses in the Psalms.

- Distress (Psalm 4:1, 18:6, 25:18, 31:9)
- Anguish (Psalm 6:3, 25:17, 31:10, 38:8)
- Fear and anxiety (Psalm 34:4, 56:3 94:19)

Of course, your most valuable resource when suffering is the Bible which has much to say about it. Many of the Psalms are prayers to be sung during times of suffering. Use your software or concordance to find what the Bible has to say about such emotions during times of suffering. Pray the Psalms that most closely match your own suffering.

We are not to seek suffering either in masochistic tendencies or as "Christian martyrs." Neither of these is a sign of God's favor, just as suffering is a sign of God's disfavor. However, we can take comfort in knowing that God will use the suffering he allows to make us more like him.

28

...about Burnout

You find it hard to get up and go to work in the morning. Work used to be exciting and you used to look forward to what you did with people, but now you are just tired and it takes a great deal of effort to get out of bed. You wonder what is wrong. Could it be that you are suffering from burnout? Could a really committed missionary burn out? You may only be in your first term; certainly you couldn't burn out in just a few years, could you? Wouldn't God keep you from burning out? Is it better to burn out than to rust out? What about that old gospel song that says, "Let me burn out for thee, dear Lord?" Let's consider some of these questions.

How do I know if I'm burning out?

Although feeling tired and not wanting to go to work may be a part of burnout, there is more to burnout than that. Burnout happens to those in the helping professions, such as doctors, nurses, social workers, psychologists, pastors, and missionaries. Three major symptoms of burnout are:

- Emotional exhaustion

The exhaustion is more than physical it is emotional, "compassion fatigue." You feel drained. You feel used up. You feel overwhelmed by the needs people come with. It is not that you don't want to help, you just do not have what it takes to help any more.

- Depersonalization

To shield yourself, you begin to reduce your close involvement with others. You begin not to notice the nationals who need help. You ignore their requests. You begin to be discourteous to the very people you came to serve. You tend to become tough, hard, and cynical, putting nationals down. You view people as objects. You used to view nationals through rose-colored glasses; now you wear rust-colored glasses.

- Reduced personal accomplishment

Whether or not you actually become ineffective, you feel ineffective. You begin to sense you are becoming the kind of person people do not like. You used to be sensitive and caring, but you realize you are becoming cold and indifferent. You see that you are not accomplishing what you felt God called you to do, and you wonder if you still hear him.

Burnout is the result of continual stress over a long period of time rather than great stress over a short one. Burnout does not happen overnight, but it creeps up on you without your realizing it. Other missionaries usually notice it long before you do, but if you check yourself periodically, you can detect it. Burnout is not a psychiatric disorder, but is a phenomenon that will greatly reduce your effectiveness as a missionary in addition to what it does to you and your family.

What causes burnout?

There are three major sources of burnout, and whether or not burnout occurs depends on all three. Knowing these can alert you to the causes, and help you evaluate whether you are at risk for burnout.

- Social

You can't be a missionary without being involved with people, and that is a source of burnout. The "problem people" require much more of your attention than do the "pleasant people." As a result you begin to see even good people as problem people. You are supposed to be polite, tactful and caring, so you feel like you cannot express the disappointment and frustration that you feel down inside. You smile and make some evasive remark rather than expressing your feelings.

Rather than getting a “thank you” from someone you have helped, you get suspicion. There are nationals you really like, but you hesitate to get too close to them because you know that you will soon be returning to your home country. It is easier not to establish a close relationship than to create one, then have to break it in a few months.

- System

Your job setting may be a source of burnout. Language school was so frustrating. When you arrived on the field, that seemed even more overwhelming. So many people to get to know, so much to do, and so little time to do it. You were doing God’s work, and there was such a need that there was no time for breaks or for vacations. Your fellow missionaries had projects that they were trying to get funded, and you knew that they were requesting funds from the same people. Your field director was to be an encouragement, but he had so many criticisms, and every compliment seemed to end with “but....” There were the plans, policies and procedures. There was so much red tape before you started a project, followed by progress reports as you were doing it and more reports when you completed it.

- Self

You may be a source of burnout yourself. If you lack self-confidence or have low self-esteem, you are a candidate for burnout. If you are unassertive, submissive, passive, anxious and blame yourself for failure, you are a candidate. If your needs for achievement, approval and affection are too high, you are a candidate. If you are impatient, irritable, and do not know how to handle anger and conflict, you are a candidate.

Can a really committed missionary burn out?

Not only can committed missionaries burn out, but the more committed they are, the more likely they are to burn out. If people slip through the screening process with major motives of travel and excitement, they can succeed at that quite readily. However, the more “ideal” missionaries are, with hearts to win people to Christ, concern for others, and high expectations, the more likely they are to burn out.

A related question is, “Can first-term missionaries burn out?” Again, the answer is that they are at greatest risk for burnout. The time of greatest risk for burnout in any people-helping occupation is the first five years on the job. That is exactly the time frame of the first term and language school in most agencies. This new worker is filled with idealism and high expectations. When reality begins to set in, the first-term missionary begins to burn out.

What are the effects of burnout?

Many pay the price when missionaries burn out. It affects everyone who comes into contact with them.

- Personal: In addition to the emotional and physical exhaustion, one may experience disturbed sleep, nightmares, illness, depression and sometimes resort to drugs or alcohol.
- Family and other missionaries: Missionaries burning out begin to expect perfection from others. This leads to impatience, bickering, and fighting at home and in the office. They are available to meet the needs of nearly anyone, except their own families and other missionaries.
- Nationals: In addition to being rude, thoughtless and treating others as objects, missionaries burning out may begin to miss more days at work, move to educating others, ask to work with work teams, or move to administration. All of this is to avoid contact with nationals, but this motive may not be conscious.

Can burnout be treated?

Yes, if caught in time. Missionaries who burn out to the point that they actually leave the field are unlikely to return. Such people recover from their burnout, but they typically move into some other type of work. Therefore, it is important to detect burnout as soon as possible and take steps to prevent it from becoming any worse. When burnout is far along, you will likely know that you are burning out, but you are not likely to notice it in the early stages. The best early warning system is not yourself, but others who are willing to point out

symptoms of burnout in you. Of course, you are their best early detection system, so check up on each other regularly.

Can burnout be prevented?

Yes! You can do many things that will prevent burnout.

Following are some suggestions:

- Set realistic goals. Set specific goals so that you will know when you have achieved them. Of course, you want to save the world, but you are not going to do it alone.
- Don't get in a rut. Vary the way you do things so that they do not become routine.
- Take breaks. This includes different kinds of breaks: (1) Coffee breaks—morning and afternoon. (2) Lunch—don't catch up on work during that time; leave the office. (3) One day a week—you were made to take a Sabbath; leave town if you have to. (4) Vacations—you can't go all year, year after year.
- Don't take things personally. You are not responsible for everything that goes wrong.
- Leave your work at work. When you come home to your family, enjoy them.
- Learn to laugh at yourself. You are not indispensable, and you do some pretty funny things.
- Have a support group. You need someone to encourage you and serve as a yardstick against which you can measure yourself realistically.
- Live a life of your own. Have some hobby or activity that you just enjoy doing regularly.
- Change jobs. If all else fails, ask for a different assignment in your mission.

All of these things are easier said than done, but they can be done. Jesus modeled this for us in a well-known cross-cultural incident in John 4. He was tired from his trip, so he sat down by the well and sent his friends shopping for a lunch. He asked someone for a drink because he was thirsty, and then he struck up a conversation with her. If Jesus can sit down to rest, have a cool drink, and chat

with someone passing by, we certainly can do so ourselves. The alternative is misery for yourself and those you live and work with, often followed by leaving your work.

29

...about Anxiety

You have been worrying more than usual lately. You used to worry only about such things as the unstable political situation or the safety of your children, but lately you seem to be anxious about everything. You even worry about such things as car repairs and having enough money for retirement. Sometimes your hands get cold and clammy, and you are beginning to have trouble sleeping. You begin to wonder such things as these: Is my anxiety serious? Can I have anxiety if I am really committed to Christ? What causes anxiety? Will I ever get over it? What can I do to prevent and get rid of it? Let's consider some of these questions.

How serious is my anxiety?

Everyone has some anxiety. For some it is anticipating speaking to a crowd. For others it is when meeting new people. For still others it is about being in a different culture. Usually this uneasiness is rather mild and does not last long. However, if it does not go away and becomes intense, you may have an anxiety disorder. To have a generalized anxiety disorder you must have the following:

- Excessive worry about many things more days than not for at least six months.
- Difficulty controlling the worrying
- At least three of the following:
- Feeling “keyed up” or “on edge”

- Easily fatigued
- Difficulty concentrating
- Irritability
- Muscle tension
- Sleep disturbances

These symptoms must be bad enough to distress you or impair your daily functioning and not be caused by drugs, hormonal imbalance, or other physical factors. However, even if you do not meet these criteria for an anxiety disorder, the material in this brochure may still help you and make your life more pleasant and make you more effective at work and in your relationships with others.

Can committed missionaries have anxiety?

The first missionary, Paul, certainly did: “When I could stand it no longer, I sent to find out about your faith. I was afraid that in some way the tempter might have tempted you and our efforts might have been useless” (1 Thessalonians 5:5 NIV). Paul had only been able to teach the scriptures for three weeks (Acts 17:2-3) before he was driven out of town, and he was concerned that the church would not last. The word for “stand it no longer” means “to cover, or conceal” (like a roof). Paul is saying that when he could conceal it no longer, he sent Timothy back to find out how they were doing (1 Thessalonians 5:1-2).

Paul had the same feelings about the Philippian church, the one he had started just before the church in Thessalonica. Paul wrote, “I think it necessary to send back to you Epaphroditusso that when you see him again you may be glad and I may have less anxiety” (Philippians 2:25-28 NIV).

This was a general feeling for Paul as a missionary. After a long list of stressful events, he wrote, “Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches (2 Corinthians 11:28 NIV).

What does the Bible say about anxiety?

Although the Bible has much to say about anxiety, the King James Version never uses the words “worry” or “anxiety,” so use a modern translation. Solomon wrote, “An anxious heart weighs a man down, but a kind word cheers him up” (Proverbs 12:25). Jesus also warned us that in the last days we must “Be careful, or your heart will be weighed down with...the anxieties of life” (Luke 21:34). Anxiety often results in depression, and both of these are most unpleasant emotions that distress us.

Not only is anxiety unpleasant, but it also has negative consequences in our lives. In explaining the parable of the sower Jesus pointed out, “The worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it (the word), making it unfruitful” (Matthew 13:22). Wealth may not be a problem in the lives of missionaries, but the worries of life may well make them unfruitful. We will consider other things the Bible says about anxiety later.

Will I ever get over anxiety?

Some people report feeling anxious all their lives, others just for several months or years. Stress often makes anxiety worse. You can control the level of your anxiety, but you must remember that some anxiety is a normal part of life, and you have to deal with it as it arises, perhaps on a daily basis.

What causes anxiety?

The list of things that can cause anxiety is nearly endless. Sometimes the cause is rather specific, such as the fear of a specific illness like malaria. Other times you may feel anxious and have no idea why. Here are some common causes among missionaries.

1. MK education
2. Health concerns
3. Political instability and terrorism
4. Transitions and separations

5. Poor communication from headquarters
6. Not knowing what is culturally appropriate
7. Anything seen as out of your control
8. Unpredictability, not knowing what is going to happen
9. Lack of information about friends in sending country
10. Etc. etc.

What can I do about anxiety?

The most important thing is to do something; do not just wait for it to go away. Notice that Paul did something about his concern for the Thessalonians. He sent Timothy to strengthen and encourage them. After that he wrote them letters. He did the same thing with the Philippians. When you pinpoint the cause of your anxiety, do something about it. For the causes mentioned above, you might do the following.

1. Ask to serve on the school board
2. Carefully wash and cook food and avoid mosquitoes
3. Use routes that avoid dangerous spots
4. Get closure on one part of your life and fully enter the next phase
5. Contact headquarters and ask
6. Plead ignorance and ask what to do
7. Look for what is under your control even when nothing seems to be
8. Learn about whatever is unpredictable. That makes it more predictable
9. Contact friends in sending country
10. Etc. etc.

All of the above will decrease your anxiety, but probably not completely erase it. The Bible tells us to take the remaining anxieties to God. Paul, who sent Epaphroditus to see the Philippians to reduce his anxiety, also told them, “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God” (Philippians 4:6 NIV). Then God’s peace could come into their thoughts and feelings.

Peter also acknowledged that we will have anxiety, and told us, “Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you” (1 Peter 5:6). The writer of Ecclesiastes said, “So then, banish anxiety from your heart” (Ecclesiastes 11:10).

Sometimes, however, even after putting our worries on God the physiological responses that are a part of anxiety still occur. Learning relaxation techniques such as the following can decrease these responses.

- Deep, relaxed breathing
- Tensing and relaxing muscles
- Shrugging and rotating your shoulders

Who can I see for help?

If self-help does not work, the kind of treatment you receive depends on whom you see for help.

- **Pastor.** Missionaries, like other Christians, often think their feelings of anxiety and worry have a spiritual basis, indicating a lack of faith. Such feelings may, and a “spiritual check-up” with your pastor is a good place to begin. If this works, fine. But if it does not, then it is good to see a mental health professional.
- **Psychologist/Counselor.** Anxiety may be caused by your way of thinking about things. A psychologist or other counselor may be able help you change your way of thinking, and such cognitive therapy may be an effective treatment for anxiety.
- **Psychiatrist.** Drugs, hormonal imbalance or other physical factors can cause anxiety. A psychiatrist is in the best position to evaluate such symptoms. A psychiatrist may also prescribe a minor tranquilizer to reduce intense anxiety temporarily so that you can learn to deal with it effectively.

Can I prevent anxiety?

You can decrease anxiety by trying to take measures to prevent problems, but such actions seldom completely prevent anxiety. Let us look at the example of Paul and the Thessalonians.

He noted that he had tried to prepare them for the problems he knew were coming, “In fact, when we were with you we kept telling you that we would be persecuted. And it turned out that way, as you well know” (3:4). Thus Paul tried to anticipate problems, and he took steps to prevent the church from falling away. However, he still was not sure, and he sent Timothy to find out how they were doing. Even after Timothy’s encouragement and glowing report, Paul still said, “Night and day we pray earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith” (3:10). He seemed still to have some anxiety about their faith, but it was no longer at the point where he could not stand it.

You can use your anxiety as a motivation to do something about the problem, which will often lower your anxiety. This will be less distressing and make you more fruitful.

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..about Coping with Anxiety

(with Marty Seitz)

After all that Jesus said about not worrying in Luke 12 and all that Paul wrote to the Philippians about not being anxious (4:6), one would think that Christian workers certainly would not suffer from anxiety. However, such is not the case as evidenced by Paul himself.

Paul wrote, “When I could stand it no longer, I sent to find out about your faith. I was **afraid** that in some way the tempter might have tempted you and our efforts might have been useless” (1 Thessalonians 3:5 NIV). He sent Timothy back to find out how they were doing.

Paul also wrote, “I think it necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus ... so that when you see him again you may be glad and I may have less **anxiety**” (Philippians 2:25-28 NIV).

After a long list of stressful events, he also wrote, “Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my **concern** for all the churches (2 Corinthians 11:28 NIV). Paul clearly had some “concerns,” “fears,” and “anxieties,” so Christians may experience these emotions, but we are not to continue in worry. We can do something to alleviate these emotions.

How do I know if I have an anxiety disorder?

Although some fear and anxiety are a normal part of life and Christians are given ways to respond to them (Philippians 4:6), sometimes fears and anxieties become overwhelming, interfering with

a person’s life. The person may find no obvious cause and neither may friends or family. These anxiety disorders can take a variety of forms.

- If you have worried about things excessively during most days over the past six months and those worries keep you from focusing on what you are doing because you are on edge, tense, irritable, unable to concentrate, and have problems sleeping, you may have **generalized anxiety disorder**.
- If more than once you have had spells when for no reason you suddenly felt extremely anxious, frightened, uncomfortable, or uneasy even in situations when most people would not feel that way and you had a continuing fear that another attack would occur, you may have a **panic disorder**.
- If during the last month you have had a fear of something that most people would not find frightening to the extent that you avoid those things and it disrupts your normal functioning or is distressing to you, you may have a **phobic disorder**.
- During the past month if you have been bothered by repeated thoughts or impulses that were unwanted, distasteful, or distressing and you could not get rid of them but had to carry them out, you may have an **obsessive-compulsive disorder**.
- If you have witnessed or experienced a traumatic event that included or threatened death or serious injury and you have re-experienced the event in a distressing way so that you avoid things that remind you of it and your reactions interfere with your normal activities, you may have a **stress disorder**.

Although it will not give a “professional diagnosis” of the anxiety disorders, questionnaires at the following web site will help you determine if you may need to see a mental health professional: www.mentalhealth.com/fr71.html.

What can I do if I have an anxiety disorder?

To ensure that a change will not be detrimental to existing medical conditions or treatments, Ideally one ought to consult a medical professional before making any significant lifestyle change.

- A good first step is to get a **medical checkup** if you have not had one recently. Sometimes physical problems or prescriptions you are taking may mimic the effects of an anxiety disorder, and treating that medical problem or changing the prescription may reduce the anxiety. Also, you may have a specific ailment that a medical approach might help.
- Be careful what you are saying to yourself. **Monitor what you are thinking** about because those thoughts may be creating the anxiety. Paul told us to think about things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, or praiseworthy (Philippians 4:8). If you are thinking about other kinds of things without developing strategies to solve the problems causing the worries, tell yourself, “Stop!” and change your thinking to the calm, hopeful, and optimistic things Paul described.
- Do some **relaxation exercises** to help reduce the anxiety. Any or all of the following may help:
 - **Stretching.** While sitting as relaxed as you can, curl your toes to tense those muscles in your feet and relax them. Then raise your toes against the tops of your shoes to tense those muscles in your feet and relax them. Then move up to your ankles and do the same thing. Then to the knees and so on up through your whole body, learning to tense and relax every muscle group.
 - **Breathing.** Deep breathing using your abdomen (rather than your chest) helps you relax. To make sure you are “belly breathing” lie on your back and place a book on your belly. Slowly inhale through your nose for about five seconds gradually filling your abdomen, and the book should rise. Then slowly exhale through nose and mouth for about five seconds, and the book should fall. Once you have learned how to do it, you can do it sitting, standing, or lying down any time to relax.
 - **Imagine one of your favorite places** (remember Paul’s advice to the Philippians) and perhaps think about being there alone or with your favorite companions. While “there,” imagine doing one of your favorite activities or enjoying one

- of your favorite things, including all of the sights, sounds, smells, and other sensations.
- Do some **soothing, calming, relaxing activities**, such as the following:
 - Listen to some of your favorite calming **music**.
 - Smell some soothing **fragrances**, such as burning a vanilla or lavender candle, assuming you are not allergic.
 - Listen to running water, wind in the pines, or waves lapping the shore. These are available on tapes, CDs, or on sound generating machines.
- **Pray** specifically about the situations causing your anxiety.
- **Ask others to pray** about those difficult situations for you and with you.
- If you wish to try **herbal supplements**, Kava Kava may help reduce anxiety, and Valerian (root) may help induce sleep if your anxiety is interfering with sleep.
- If some problem is causing you to worry, **take steps to solve the problem**.
 - Think of the best thing that could happen and what would cause that outcome. Come up with “Plan A” to work toward that outcome.
 - Think of the worst thing that could happen and what would cause that outcome. Come up with “Plan B” to cope with that outcome.
- If your difficulty is in social relationships in which you need to **confront** someone about a problem, note how God confronted the churches in Chapters 2 and 3 of Revelation, telling the truth in love.
 - First, he **affirmed** them, said something positive about each of them. (Your good deeds, your faith, your perseverance, etc.)
 - Second, he **confronted** them about the problem. (Yet, I hold this against you ... Nevertheless, I have a few things against you.)
 - Third, he specified the **consequences**. (If you do not repent, I will ...Repent, therefore! Otherwise I will ...)

- Fourth, he **reaffirmed** them. (To him who overcomes, I will give ...)
- Make a plan deciding how you will word your affirmation, your confrontation, the consequences, and your reaffirmation of the other person.
- If a specific object or situation produces anxiety in you, **take steps** to gradually reduce that anxiety by facing it.
 - First, **make a list** of the things that arouse the most to the least fear. For example, if you are afraid of dogs, think of the most feared situation with a dog, then the next most feared situation with a dog, and so forth down to one that would cause no fear.
 - Second, **practice the relaxation exercises** described earlier so that you can relax whenever you want to.
 - Third, **imagine the least feared** thing. If you have any anxiety, practice relaxing until you can think about it and still be relaxed. Keep doing this with things that are a little more frightening each time (over the days ahead) until you can think of even the most frightening without becoming overly anxious.
 - Even better than imagining them is to actually **encounter them in real life** if that is possible. Practice getting closer and closer to the feared object or situation. For example, keep playing with a little puppy until you are not anxious. Then do the same thing with larger and larger gentle dogs until the fear is gone.
- If you cannot seem to stop thinking about something, try the following steps
 - **Recognize** that it may be a disorder.
 - **Relabel** the problem as due to an obsessive-compulsive disorder.
 - **Refocus** on something other than the obsession.
- If you feel compelled to repeat some act, **gradually delay carrying out the action** for longer and longer periods of time. For example, if you feel compelled to wash your hands because of your fear of the germs on them, first delay washing them one

- minute, then delay washing them two minutes, then five minutes, etc. Using relaxation to deal with anxiety, gradually lengthen the time until you no longer feel you have to do it.
- If you keep re-experiencing a traumatic event, try actually **writing down a complete description** of everything that happened, just as if you were giving a testimony in court. Write down not only what happened objectively but also write every thought, feeling, and image you have of that time. Then reread it often (several times a day if possible), imagining everything that happened each time. **Invite Christ into that image**, especially at the point in which the scene is the worst, at the point of your greatest need or weakness. This will not necessarily erase the scene, but it often takes the emotional sting out of it.
 - **Read some good books** on the subject of anxiety such as *The Anxiety & Phobia Workbook* by Edmond J. Bourne, *Brain Lock: Free Yourself from Obsessive-Compulsive Behavior* by Jeffrey Schwartz, *Don't Panic: Taking Control of Anxiety Attacks* by Reid Wilson, or *I Can't Get over It: A Handbook for Trauma Survivors* by Aphrodite Matsakis.
 - Find information about anxiety on the **Internet** at sites such as the one maintained by the National Library of Medicine at www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/anxiety.html or <http://mentalhelp.net/disorders/>. These web sites have numerous links to reliable information about anxiety. (Remember that the domains .gov and .edu tend to be the most reliable.)

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...about Perfectionism

During her first term of service Betsy had a maid and housekeeper, but she never put the hiring of help in prayer letters for fear that supporters would think she was pampered. Later she and her husband bought a house back “home” so their children always return to the same place—what would those who gave money think? Then someone loaned them an SUV to drive for deputation—a Lexus. Surely their supporters would stop giving.

When introducing himself to a group of nationals, Paul thought he had told them he was embarrassed about his language ability, but he had told them he was pregnant! Even though they laughed, he believed he was stupid and could hardly face the other missionaries. He just could not get that incident out of his mind because he wanted to do everything right. He had agreed to write an article for the monthly agency newsletter, and he had written the article; however, he had missed three deadlines to submit it because he kept going over it to make sure it was perfect.

What is perfectionism?

Perfectionism is a trait that some missionaries have, a trait that involves setting goals or standards so high that they are virtually impossible. Such perfectionists measure their self-worth by their performance in reaching these goals; however, they are usually disappointed when they fail and are very critical of themselves for this

failure. They believe that anything short of perfection is terrible and that people will lose respect for them if they make any mistakes.

They get caught in a vicious cycle as follows.

- Setting impossible goals
- Failing to reach those goals
- Becoming less productive with failure
- Blaming themselves, which lowers esteem
- Trying harder by setting additional impossible goals...

Perfectionists are usually rather unhappy and depressed, feel guilty, have no sense of personal satisfaction, and perform more poorly than people who set more realistic goals.

What is not perfectionism?

Although similar to striving for excellence, perfectionism is not the same. Setting realistic goals and standards and then working to reach them is very good. Healthy strivers set goals that are attainable, just a little more than they have already done, and they feel satisfied when they reach their goals.

Also mistakes or failures are interpreted quite differently. Such failures are seen as a learning opportunity and an incentive to work harder by those striving for excellence. Perfectionists see failures or mistakes as personal defects. They may have difficulty understanding that baseball players who fail to get hits 70% of the time are considered to be excellent players.

Doesn't the Bible say to be perfect?

The Bible has many passages about being perfect, and it refers to one group of people who at least border on perfectionism.

The Old Testament has very few places where it commands people to be perfect. Moses said, “Thou shalt be perfect with the LORD thy God (Deuteronomy 18:13, King James Version). The Hebrew word “tamim” used in that passage means “whole” or “complete.” Most recent versions translate it differently than the King James Version.

The New Testament has more places which tell Christians to be perfect. Here are some passages spoken by Jesus and written by an early missionary.

- Jesus, “Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matthew 5:48).
- Jesus, “If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor” (Matthew 19:21).
- Paul, “We proclaim him...so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ” (Colossians 1:28).

These passages and many others in the New Testament use the Greek word “telios” which basically means mature or complete. Although perfectionists may believe they must become flawless in everything they do and say, telios (perfect) does not mean that.

What does the Bible say about perfectionism?

One group who at least bordered on perfectionism was the Pharisees who tried to keep every rule in the Old Testament as well as all of the traditions that had developed during past centuries. They often criticized those who did not share their ideas, and they did not have anything to do with such “sinners.”

The Pharisees condemned Jesus because his disciples picked some grain along the way and ate it on the Sabbath. Eating was not against the rules, but harvesting was (Matthew 12:1-14). Jesus warned his followers to avoid being like the Pharisees (Matthew 23:1-36).

Paul, an early missionary, said he was a Pharisee, and the son of a Pharisee, part of the strictest sect of Judaism. He tried to do everything perfectly right for years even if it meant putting Christians in prison and killing them (Acts 23:6; Acts 26:5; Acts 22:3-5). However, after meeting Jesus, Paul said that he considered all of this “perfect” performance as worthless loss and as rubbish (NIV), garbage (NLT), or even dung (KJV) (Philippians 3:7-9).

What causes perfectionism?

Several things can lead to perfectionism, but the probably the most common are developmental and cognitive factors.

Early in life, as children, some missionaries may have found that people in their lives valued them because of their performance, how much they succeeded. Rather than valuing themselves as children of God, these missionaries began trying to win the approval of others. As adult missionaries they then try to please everyone by being absolutely perfect and never making a mistake or failing anything.

Other missionaries may have developed some flaws in their thinking, often in thinking about God. They may see God as being pleased with them only if they have a certain minimum number of converts, only if they spend so much time in devotions and prayer, etc. They have long lists of “shoulds” or “oughts” that are impossible to keep. They fall short of their goals, and become critical of others who do not live up to their own goals. Even though other missionaries may see them as very successful, they feel like failures themselves.

What can missionaries do about perfectionism?

Perfectionists often find it very difficult to change. They have often been that way for many years and do not want to quit or find it difficult to quit even though they are unhappy, depressed, and not functioning well. Remember that God had to blind Paul for three days before he was ready to begin changing (Acts 9). We do not know how long it took for Paul to change, but we do know that he went immediately into Arabia to allow God to work in him before he talked with anyone else. After his time “alone” with God in Arabia, Paul returned to Damascus for three years before going to Jerusalem to get acquainted with Peter and talk with James (Galatians 1:11-24).

Because some missionaries find it so difficult to change, and the process of changing takes far more space than is available here, I am not even attempting to summarize what needs to be done. For

those readers who want to try changing, here is a link to excellent information about perfectionism on-line. Perfectionism in Perspective is provided by the Centre for Clinical Interventions, Government of Western Australia, Department of Health at http://www.cci.health.wa.gov.au/resources/infopax.cfm?Info_ID=52. This information package is organized into modules one can work through. The modules are as follows.

1. What is perfectionism?
2. Understanding perfectionism
3. What keeps perfectionism going?
4. Changing perfectionism
5. Reducing my perfectionist behavior
6. Challenging my perfectionist thinking
7. Adjusting unhelpful rules and assumptions
8. Re-evaluating the importance of achieving
9. Putting it all together

These modules are each ten pages long, but the pages have many illustrations and lots of white space. The modules are written to be done in the order they are presented, so even though Module 1 has the same title as the first section of this document, please note that it has much more information than presented here. It is essential to do Module 1 before trying to do any of the others. Then do Module 2, etc.

In addition, as perfectionistic missionaries do the modules they need to remember to bring in thoughts and behaviors that are unique to them and their Christian perspective. For example, when listing unrealistic goals they should think of things such as the following.

- “All of my Bible school students must like me.” Jesus told the apostles that people would hate them and persecute them (Matthew 10, John 15). Paul, an early missionary, met many people who did not like him (2 Corinthians 11).
- “I must have many converts every time I preach.” Paul preached a great sermon in Athens and had only “a few” converts (Acts 17). Other times when he preached or healed he was arrested or driven out of town.

In addition, asking trusted people to help one become aware of unrealistic goals can be very valuable. These people do not need to be counselors or pastors, but they must be trusted people who know the missionaries well. Many missionaries have a select group of supporters who they can ask to pray for “healing” or “growth” as they struggle with things like perfectionism.

32

...about Panic Attacks

Bill was walking down the street near his home when his heart started pounding, it was hard to breathe, his chest tightened, and he had pain in it. He was terrified and thought he was going to die of a heart attack. He went immediately to an urgent treatment center only ten minutes away, but by then he felt much better. Tests there showed no sign of a heart attack or any other physical problem.

He had served in two countries where there were many reasons to be afraid, but he had never felt this kind of fear. How could it be that he had it here back in his peaceful passport country after serving for three years in a job he loved at headquarters? What caused it? Will it happen again? What can he do about it?

What is a panic attack?

A panic attacks occur when, without warning, individuals experience intense fear that occurs suddenly and for no apparent reason. It is one of the most unpleasant, terrifying, and upsetting experiences individuals can have. Although the attack is usually over in a few minutes, it may take people days to fully get over it, and those individuals may fear having another one.

The American Psychological Association notes that “Many people experience occasional panic attacks, and if you have had one or two such attacks, there probably isn’t any reason to worry” (<http://www.apa.org/topics/anxiety/panic-disorder.aspx#>).

However, people who continue to have them are diagnosed with panic disorder, about 1 in every 75 people. To get some indication of whether you have cause for concern you may want to take the Panic Disorder Severity Scale. A self-report form of that scale is at <http://serene.me.uk/tests/pdss.pdf>. This is just a screening test, but if you score above ten, it is a good idea to look for professional help.

For some unknown reason, during a panic attack the sympathetic branch of the autonomic nervous system arouses the whole body. Its neurons are interconnected so it arouses glands and smooth muscles all over, including the adrenal glands. Adrenalin (epinephrine) from those glands flows throughout the body through the blood stream. The heart pounds, breathing increases, sweat glands secrete, pupils dilate, etc. All of this unexpected arousal is terrifying. It can occur even while asleep.

What are the symptoms of a panic attack?

As would be expected from what scientists know about the sympathetic nervous system, the symptoms are:

- Heart palpitations or racing heart
- Feeling sweaty or having chills
- Shortness of breath, hyperventilation, or feeling of choking
- Chest pain or discomfort
- Dizziness, lightheaded, or feeling faint
- Nausea or stomachache
- Trembling or shaking
- Numbness or tingling in hands and fingers
- Fear of losing control, going insane, or dying

What does the Bible say about panic attacks?

The Bible has several references to panic. Some are about soldiers in battle panicking, deserting, and running away. Others are about people terrified by disease or fire. Still others are about horses

fleeing in fear. All of these have someone terrified of a known problem and getting away as fast as possible.

However, the Bible says nothing about panic attacks. Such attacks are internal rather than external. The persons experiencing them are keenly aware of the feelings of panic but often try not to express those feelings. Most people are embarrassed to show the signs of panic when no “reason” is apparent.

What will panic attacks do to one’s ministry?

The immediate effects of panic attacks on missionary ministry are obvious. Whether missionaries are teaching, preaching, counseling, or interacting in any other way with people, their effectiveness will decrease when they experience the symptoms above. People interacting with the missionary will wonder what is wrong.

Later effects, after recovering from the attack, include the following.

- Avoidance. The missionary may quit doing anything, including ministry, that may trigger an attack.
- Anticipatory anxiety. The missionary may become anxious just thinking about having another attack.
- Agoraphobia. Afraid of having an attack when people are around, the missionary may avoid people and crowds, even to the extent of staying home nearly all the time.

How can panic attacks be treated?

The good news is that most, 70% to 90% of people who have even frequent attacks, find relief. Just knowing about the nervous and hormonal basis of the attacks helps. Here are some things to do.

- Renew your commitment to God and ask him to help you.
- Avoid caffeine and other habit forming drugs, especially stimulants.
- Get a half-hour of aerobic exercise daily.
- Learn stress management techniques, such as deep breathing.

- Learn relaxation techniques, such as breathing retraining and positive visualization.
- Remind yourself that attacks have a physical basis and decrease irrational thoughts.
- Gradually increase exposure to situations that have triggered attacks.
- Consult a physician about the possibility of anti-anxiety or anti-depressant drugs.

How can panic attacks be prevented?

The bad news is that attacks cannot be completely prevented. Remember that the American Psychological Association said that “Many people experience occasional panic attacks.” Sometimes the sympathetic branch of the autonomic nervous system just arouses the body.

The good news is that many of the things missionaries can do to treat it also can prevent it.

- Meditate on God’s word and prayer each day to maintain your relationship with him.
- Eat a healthy balanced diet while avoiding caffeine and other drugs.
- Exercise daily and get needed sleep.
- Minimize over-the-counter supplements and herbal remedies which may contain a variety of chemicals.
- Avoid stressful situations and manage stress when it does occur.

Can missionaries with panic attacks lead normal lives?

Of course, the good news is that they can lead normal, productive lives of service.

Unfortunately, missionaries may feel shame or guilt thinking they lack the faith needed to keep the attacks away. They self-diagnose the problem as a spiritual one rather than a physical one. Their concern may increase the probability of more attacks.

Missionaries are unlikely to feel guilty if they have diabetes because their pancreas secreting too little insulin. Just as there is no need to feel guilty if the pancreas is not aroused enough by the sympathetic nervous system, there is no need to feel guilty when the sympathetic nervous system and adrenal glands provide too much stimulation to organs all over the body.

Given that things may trigger the sympathetic branch at “random” times when missionaries do not expect it, these missionaries need a plan to calm that system. Here are some suggestions.

- When you feel one “symptom,” do not let your anxiety about it bring on a full-blown attack. For example, if you notice that your breathing has changed, do not worry about it and bring on a full attack.
- Learn how to decrease or stop an attack if a full one does occur. Note the ways attacks can be treated above.
- Avoid triggers if possible, and respond to them immediately if they do occur.
- Replace negative thoughts, such as “My faith is weak” with realistic, positive ways of viewing attacks.
- Join or begin a support group so you can share with others facing the same.

What does the Bible say that would help a panic attack?

The Bible has many promises and passages that help reduce anxiety and increase confidence and comfort. Make a list of verses that are particularly meaningful to you and memorize some of them to recall when a panic attack strikes. Here are some suggestions.

- 1 Peter 5:7. Cast all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.
- Philippians 4:6. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication...
- John 14:1. Don't let your hearts be troubled, believe in God...

This list could go on and on, but these are passages that speak to me. Develop a list through which the Holy Spirit speaks to you,

and then memorize them. God can use his Word to calm you enough to prevent such attacks and help you control them.

33

...about Depression

It occurs to you that you have been feeling really sad, tired, discouraged about the future, unable to concentrate for some time, and you begin to wonder what is wrong. You just wish you could feel happy and enjoy life again. Certainly committed Christian missionaries could not be depressed, could they? Wouldn't God keep them from that? Should you pray? See someone for counsel? See your physician? Will you get better? How long will you feel like this? Let's consider some of these questions.

How do I know if I'm depressed?

The definition of depression changes slightly from time to time, but currently a person must have at least one of the following symptoms *most of the day, nearly every day, for two or more weeks* to be considered "clinically depressed:"

- Feel sad, depressed, or empty
 - Lose interest or pleasure in almost all activities
- In addition, the person must have more than three or four of the following *nearly every day* for the *same two or more weeks*:
- Great increase or decrease in appetite
 - Sleeping much more or less
 - Agitation or sluggishness
 - Fatigue or loss of energy
 - Feelings of worthlessness or guilt

- Decreased ability to think or decide
- Thoughts of death or suicide

These symptoms must be bad enough to distress you or impair your daily functioning and not be caused by drugs, hormonal imbalance, or other physical problems. If you do not have at least five of these symptoms (including one of the first two), then you do not meet the definition of "clinical" depression. Even if you are not clinically depressed, suggestions in this brochure may be of benefit to you.

Can God's people be depressed?

Depression is the "common cold" of psychological disorders. About 20 of every 100 women and about 10 of every 100 men experience clinical depression at some time in their lives. Christians sometimes deny that they feel depressed, but many do, as did God's choice people thousands of years ago. Of course, there is no way we can go back and ask people in the Bible whether or not they have five or more of these symptoms, but let's look at some things they said about themselves.

- David, king: "How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and every day have sorrow in my heart?...My life is consumed by anguish and my years by groaning; my strength fails because of my affliction" (Psalm 13:2; 31:10 NIV).
- Job, layman: "Why did I not perish at birth, and die as I came from the womb?...I have no peace, no quietness; I have no rest, but only turmoil" (Job 3:11, 26 NIV).
- Elijah, prophet: "I have had enough, Lord. Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors (1 Kings 19:4 NIV).
- Jonah, missionary: "O, Lord, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live" (Jonah 4:3 NIV).

Can committed missionaries today be depressed?

Maybe heroes and heroines of the faith in Bible times became depressed, but what about some of our great missionary founders. Let us look at what they said:

- A. B. Simpson, founder of the Christian and Missionary Alliance: I fell “into the slough of despond so deep that...work was impossible...I wandered about deeply depressed. All things in life looked dark and withered.”
- Adoniram Judson, missionary to Burma: “God is to me the Great Unknown. I believe in him, but I find him not.”
- Mary Morrison, wife of Robert Morrison (China), who wrote, “My poor afflicted Mary...She walks in darkness and has no light.”
- David Brainerd, missionary to native Americans: “I live in the most lonely melancholy desert...My soul was weary of life. I longed for death, beyond measure.”

What Causes Depression?

Many different things may cause depression. Here are just a few:

- Loss, disappointment, failure, grief
- Unfulfilled expectations, concern about the future
- Negative thinking, success seen as failure
- Medicine side effects, illness, imbalance of hormones or neurotransmitters
- Lack of social support, conflict
- Guilt, unforgiven sin
- Too little light, too much heat

Will I ever get over depression?

The good news is that although depressed people often feel so bad that it seems hopeless, most people recover from their depressions in a few months to a year or more without professional

help. Depressions come, and, usually within months, they go. The bad news is that when people become depressed, the condition may interfere with their work and relationships. Some become so hopeless that they may try to take their own lives before they start to improve. Some types of depression do not get better without treatment; in fact, they can get worse. Other bad news is that about half the people who have depression once have it again.

What can I do about Depression?

Many people begin by trying to treat it themselves. Here are some things you might do:

- ***If you have not been doing all the things listed below as preventives, do them***
- Replace negative with positive thoughts
- Keep a journal of what you think and feel
- Give yourself affirmations
- Listen to relaxing music
- Get more light or less heat
- Change your normal routine
- Set realistic goals and record reaching them weekly

Also, recent evidence shows that St. John’s Wort, a common plant worldwide, may help relieve mild to moderate depression; it is widely used in Europe. Although it may not grow near you, it is widely available without prescription in pharmacies and wherever over-the-counter medications are sold. ***People who are seriously depressed and considering suicide should not attempt self-treatment, but seek professional help immediately.***

Who can I see for help?

If self-help does not work, the kind of treatment you receive depends on who you see for help.

- Pastor. Missionaries, like other Christians, often think their feelings of sadness, guilt, and worthlessness have a spiritual basis. Didn’t Jesus come that we might have joy, forgiveness, and life as

children of God? Of course he did, and a talk with your pastor for a “spiritual check-up” is a good place to begin. If this spiritual treatment works, fine. But if it does not, then it is good to see a mental health professional.

- Psychiatrist. Depression may have as its cause a chemical imbalance, and psychiatrists tend to emphasize chemical treatment. If your depression is caused by your blood pressure medication, for example, that may need to be changed. If you have an imbalance in the serotonin in your brain, an antidepressant, such as Prozac or Zoloft, may help.
- Psychologist/Counselor. Depression may be caused by your way of thinking about things. Cognitive therapy, which helps you change the way you think about things, is widely used by psychologists and other counselors, and it may help your depression.

We have come to expect instant fixes for any problems we have, and you must be aware that none of these professionals can bring about a cure in a few days. All of these usually take several weeks, but they do often shorten the depression. In addition, your depression may have several causes, so that you need several different kinds of treatment at the same time. You can pray long, but if your depression is a result of your way of thinking or a side effect of a medication you are taking, God may answer your prayer through counseling and/or appropriate medication

Can I prevent depression?

There is no sure way to prevent any disorder. People inherit tendencies toward certain disorders, and if depression runs in your family, you are a more likely candidate. However, there are steps you can take that make depression less likely. The most helpful thing you can do is greatly to reduce stress!! Of course, telling missionaries to avoid stress is like telling them to quit; but fortunately, factors that increase happiness also tend to reduce stress.

Happy people tend to have:

- High self-esteem. Remember that you are created in God’s image.
- Optimism. Change your thinking to see the good in every situation.
- Close friendships (or a satisfying marriage). You are part of the body of Christ
- Meaningful faith and work. You are a part of God’s plan for the redemption of the world.
- Adequate sleep and exercise. Although this seems unrelated, not taking care of yourself physically leads to depression.
- Enjoyable activities. Regularly do “fun” things.

Although depression is common, you can take steps to prevent it and recover from it. You can find joy and hope.

34

...about Coping with Depression

(with Marty Seitz)

Christians are not immune to emotional disorders, such as depression. Although a clinical term that is not used in the Bible, depression appears to have been relatively common among early leaders of God's people.

Early church musicians who wrote Psalms 69, 88, and 102 expressed the despair of depression in the context of hope. Moses, a leader of God's people and well-known author, asked God to put him to death because he could not carry the burden of the people God had asked him to lead (Numbers 11). Jonah, a successful early cross-cultural missionary, also asked God to take his life when his anger resulted in a wish for death (Jonah 4). Elijah, a leader with the gift of prophecy, fell into the depths of depression. He prayed to die immediately after intense spiritual warfare and a great victory over the forces of evil (1 Kings 19). Therefore, even those actively involved in ministry can become depressed.

Depression and its causes

Although depressed Christians may have many different symptoms, the core of depression always includes depressed moods (sadness, emptiness, tearfulness) or loss of interest or pleasure in most activities. In addition, it may include changes in weight, sleep, energy, emotions, and thoughts. It has many causes, including:

- Genetic and biological—depression runs in families

- Medical—the side effects of some medical conditions and some medications may include depression
- Background and family causes—childhood experiences can lead to later depression
- Stress or significant loss or changes, such as separation, birth of a child, or death may result in depression
- Learned helplessness in situations where we feel like we have little or no control
- Thinking in ways that overlook the positive and see only the pessimistic
- Anger turned against yourself
- Sin and guilt leading to self-condemnation and hopelessness
- A lack of positive or pleasant experiences
- Having a lack of meaning in life

How do I know if I'm depressed?

The definition of depression changes slightly from time to time, but currently a person must have at least one of the following symptoms *most of the day, nearly every day, for two or more weeks* to be considered “clinically depressed:”

- Feel sad, depressed, or empty
 - Lose interest or pleasure in almost all activities
- In addition, the person must have more than three or four of the following *nearly every day* for the *same two or more weeks*:
- Great increase or decrease in appetite
 - Sleeping much more or less
 - Agitation or sluggishness
 - Fatigue or loss of energy
 - Feelings of worthlessness or guilt
 - Decreased ability to think or decide
 - Thoughts of death or suicide

These symptoms must be bad enough to distress you or impair your daily functioning. If you do not have at least five of these

symptoms (including one of the first two), then you do not meet the definition of “clinical” depression. Even if you are not clinically depressed, suggestions in this brochure may be of benefit to you. (Note that if your symptoms have been moderate and have lasted two or more years, or if they include great swings in mood including periods of elation, recommended treatment may be different from that recommended below.)

Although it will not give a professional diagnosis of depression, a depression questionnaire at the following web site will help you determine if you may need to see a mental health professional: <http://mentalhelp.net/guide/dep2quiz.htm>

What can I do if I’m depressed?

Consulting a mental health professional would be ideal. Also ideal would be getting a thorough physical exam. Depression can have physical bases, and your physician may be able to evaluate you for an antidepressant if necessary. However, some Christian workers live in isolated areas where there are no mental health professionals. Others have no health insurance or only insurance that does not cover mental health, and they cannot afford to pay the bills themselves. But if you are feeling tempted to act on suicidal thoughts, that indicates you need immediate help from someone other than yourself. The following are specific applications of our “General Principles of Stewardship of Self.” You may find one or more of these helpful in beginning to care for yourself.

- Read portions of **Scripture** that seem particularly well-suited to expressing the feelings and thoughts of persons when they are depressed. For example, pray Psalm 13 with King David, leader of God’s people. Also read Scripture passages filled with hope, such as Psalm 40, Psalm 42, or 2 Corinthians 1:3-11.
- Find information about depression on the **Internet** at sites such as the one maintained by the National Library of Medicine at www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/depression.html or the one at <http://mentalhelp.net/disorders/>. These web sites have numerous

links to reliable information about depression. (Remember that the domains .gov and .edu tend to be the most reliable.)

- Read good **books** about depression, such as *Feeling Good: The New Mood Therapy*, *The Feeling Good Handbook*, or *Ten Days to Self-Esteem*, all by David Burns. Or read *Happiness is a Choice: The Symptoms, Causes and Cures of Depression* by Frank Minirth and Paul Meier.
- Keep a **log** of your symptoms of depression to find events or thoughts that occur before the symptoms get better or worse. Then avoid those events or thoughts that precede depression and increase your participation in events or concentrate on thoughts that prevent or decrease it.
- Find ways to **reward** yourself for thinking or behaving in ways that decrease your depression when you discover what helps. For example, if saying, “This too shall pass” helps, pat yourself on the back by also saying, “I’m putting feet to my prayers by talking to myself this way.”
- Do **activities** that once were rewarding or pleasurable, even if you do not think they will bring you pleasure now. If you cannot think of any, do something that most people find pleasurable, such as enjoying nature, listening to music, or reading a good book.
- Take time to be out in the **bright light** of the sun while protecting your skin since sunlight often helps reduce depression.
- **Confess** a fault or sin to an appropriate person in order to alleviate guilt.
- Make a **caring confrontation** if you need to confront someone about things they are doing that are hurtful to you or others.
- **Ask for help** from trusted friends, family members, physicians, or counselors.
- **Make a choice** to take the first step in putting feet to your prayers for overcoming depression by deciding on one thing you can do for yourself today. Then do it.
- **Tell someone** else about your commitment to take that step to actually do something.
- Ask that person to hold you **accountable** for taking that step.

- **Express** the sadness, grief, and pain of loss or frustration. Isaiah is often interpreted as referring to Jesus as the “Man of Sorrows” (53:3-4). John recorded that “Jesus wept (11:35).
- **Focus thinking** on things that are good, pure, lovely, true, noble, and admirable (Philippians 4:8). These are things that give us hope. Take off the “dark glasses” and look at the good that can come from your troubled situation. Remember the old song that said, “Count your many blessings; name them one by one.”
- If no medical professional is available, several **herbal supplements** are effective for the treatment of mild to moderate depression. St. John’s Wort and Sam-E are widely available—but if you take these, be sure to tell your physician when you see him or her.
- After checking with your doctor, if one is available, gradually work up to **exercising** (after beginning to perspire) for at least twenty minutes at least three times during the week. Such aerobic exercise has proven effective in reducing depression.
- Force yourself to **be with people** even when you do not feel like it. During depression the tendency is to withdraw from others, but being with people may actually help relieve your depression.
- If you cannot make yourself socialize, **ask someone else to coax you** to be with others even when you persistently resist.
- **Find a trusted person or group** with whom you can share your struggles. Just as you have wept with those who weep, let others weep with you. If you are in an isolated location, numerous Internet support groups are available on-line.
- **Monitor** your thoughts for self-talk that is despairing and hopeless. Then tell yourself, “Stop!” Do not continue to think that way but choose to repeat true and hopeful thoughts.
- **Read or sing or listen** to hymns or choruses or other Christian music that are hopeful, such as “It Is Well With My Soul” or “This Is the Day.”
- Think of **things that helped in the past** when you were depressed. Then do those things again.

- **Ask other people** what they have done when they were depressed. What worked for others may work for you.
- **Write** out your thoughts and feelings on paper. Create a poem. Compose a hymn that expresses both the pain of your depression and the hope for relief.
- Do something to **help someone else** with no expectation of receiving anything in return. This will get your focus off yourself and on to helping others.
- Do not be afraid of bringing others “down.” You may be giving them an opportunity to minister to you—and you can **set an example of vulnerability** that encourages them to be honest.
- Specifically **pray for direction** from the Holy Spirit about what is causing the depression and what to do about it. Remember that he is the great Physician.
- **Ask others to pray specifically** for you about your depression and its symptoms.
- Take advantage of **healing services** offered in your church.
- If nothing you try seems to help, try to **discern** how God may use your depression in the larger context of his kingdom.
 - It may prepare you to minister more effectively to others by giving you empathy (2 Corinthians 1:3-7).
 - It may help keep you humble and dependent on God (2 Corinthians 12:7).
 - It may produce spiritual blessing (James 1:12) or demonstrate God’s power (John 9:1-7).
 - It may be a sign that you belong to Christ (1 Peter 4:12-19).
 - God may use it to test your faithfulness (The book of Job).

You may not be able to do all of these things, and they do not all work with everyone. However, all of them have helped some people, and one or more of them may be just what you need to reduce your depression.

35

...about Suicide

As a teacher in a Christian International school, imagine that during your last class of the day as you hand back test papers one female student says, “I can’t believe I did that. I could shoot myself!” As you sit in the faculty meeting the next hour, a teacher retiring at the end of the year is unfairly reprimanded by the headmaster. He turns to you and says, “On days like this I feel hopeless, like I would be better off dead.”

At first you ignore the remarks because you think the people could not really mean them. After all, they are both Christians serving God overseas, so surely they would not do such a thing. However, later that evening you have second thoughts. Perhaps the student really meant it! Adolescent girls only talk about suicide, but they do not actually do it, do they? Aren’t boys the ones who do? Perhaps the teacher really meant it—but no, as a respected older man he has too much to live for. Besides, adolescents take their lives, not older people, do they? In addition, you do not want to talk about it and plant the idea!

Suppose you are wrong. What if they really meant it? How would you know if they meant it? What could you do about it? What if you are thinking of taking your own life? Let us consider these things.

Is that true?

Many myths surround suicide. If you believe these myths, you may miss a chance to save a life. Here are a few of those myths.

- People who talk about suicide never do it—they just want attention. False. Not everyone who talks about suicide actually does it, but most people who commit suicide do tell someone before doing so—as a cry for help. Any serious statement about suicide is a real danger signal and should not be ignored.
- Adolescents are much more likely to commit suicide than adults. False. The adolescent suicide rate is about the same as adult rates. The people most at risk for suicide are older males, someone such as the retiring teacher.
- People are more likely to commit suicide around the Christmas holidays, not in the spring of the year (when the school year is ending). False. The holidays have one of the lowest suicide rates, and spring has the highest.
- One should not mention suicide when talking to depressed people because it may give them ideas. False. Such people often have such thoughts already and should be encouraged to express them. In fact, talking about it may discourage people from doing it.

Is suicide sin?

Many people assume that the Bible states that suicide is sin. It is true that several people (Judas, for example) took their own lives, and God never gave his approval to any of those. Most of those who took their own lives did it as a direct result of doing evil, and they probably could see no other way out.

However, the Bible nowhere specifically states that suicide is sin. The Bible does say that murder (taking someone’s life) is wrong. In fact, that is one of the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20. Most Christians believe that the commandment not to take someone’s life includes not taking one’s own life.

Would God's people do it?

Godly people are no exception. The Bible records several prominent individuals who wanted death very much. We often quote wonderful statements Job made as he suffered, but we forget some of his negative statements. Job cursed the day of his birth (Job 3:1), asked why he did not die at birth (Job 3:11), and wished he had never come into being or died at birth (Job 10:19).

In fact, some of God's people wish for death shortly after great spiritual victories. For example, shortly after Elijah had a great victory over the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel, he was sitting under a tree praying that he might die. He said, "I've had it, Lord. Take my life" (1 Kings 19:4). Of course, God did not take his life but let him sleep and sent an angel to tell Elijah to get something to eat. It is not unusual to feel the worst soon after wonderful things happen.

Missionaries wouldn't, would they?

Yes, missionaries may come to wish for death as well. This goes back to the first cross-cultural missionary in the Old Testament, and it happened after one of the most successful missionary terms ever. After his initial disobedience, Jonah obeyed God. When he did, more than 120,000 people repented. Instead of rejoicing, Jonah wanted to die and told God, "I'd be better off dead" (Jonah 4:8). Of course, God did not take his life but tried to reason with him.

Like other people, missionaries and TCKs do take their lives. If you hear people say that they are thinking of suicide, it is time for you to take action to prevent it.

What can I do?

Of course, you want to help, but how do you know what to do? What you do depends on how serious the person is about harming himself or herself. You can do this by going through the following three steps in order. If at any time during these steps you feel uncomfortable about doing them, you can report what you have

found to the person's superior in his or her agency. Do not simply ignore this call for help—do something!

Step 1: The idea?

Ask people whether or not they have thought about harming themselves. Some people will say that they never have. Others (probably the majority) will say that they have, but it was during a difficult time years ago, and they would never do anything like that now. If that is the case, just let the issue drop. However, if they say that they have been thinking recently about taking their lives, you need to take further action.

Don't act shocked or be sworn to secrecy. Do listen non-judgmentally, offer empathy, show interest and support, talk openly about suicide, and offer hope that alternatives are available. Offer to pray with them and share scripture with them (have passages in mind). Encourage such persons to talk with a mental health professional who can take responsibility. Missionaries sometimes would rather talk with a pastor, and that is fine as well. If the person talks with one of these, your task is finished. However, if they refuse to talk with someone else, go on to Step 2, and remember that you should never leave a person alone who is actively suicidal.

Step 2: A plan?

Note that people harm themselves in different ways. Ask the persons whether or not they have considered various ways of doing it. Even if they have not begun to plan by thinking about a way, offer to make an appointment for them with someone competent to help, such as a mental health professional or pastor of their choice. Also get at least a verbal commitment not to harm themselves but to contact you if the feelings come again. Express your concern and care for them and follow-up to see that they keep their appointment.

If they have considered various ways, ask them whether or not they have chosen a way. If they have not chosen a way, offer to go with them to see a mental health professional or a pastor. If they have

chosen a way, insist on a commitment in writing—a contract signed by both of you in which they promise to do no harm to themselves. Again express your concern and care and follow up immediately with Step 3. Remember that actively suicidal persons should not be left alone.

(Note: If at any point they refuse to continue talking with you or see someone else, contact someone who can take responsibility for them. This may be a professional in their agency, their supervisor, or anyone else who can help.)

Step 3: The means?

Ask them if they have acquired the means to do the harm. That is find out if they have the gun, the pills, the rope, the knife, and so forth. If they have the means to do the harm, call immediately for help and stay with them until someone specializing in crisis intervention and suicide prevention arrives.

What if they do?

If a person is determined to commit suicide, you probably cannot prevent it. I know of one missionary who was in a mental health facility because of depression and suicidal tendencies. Even though the staff knew about his condition, he was able to take his own life while under their care.

If people you have been trying to help take their own lives, it is not your fault. Your responsibility is to love and care for them as well as you can. If you do that, you have done all that is possible.

What if it's me?

You may be reading this because you are the one contemplating suicide. If so, follow the advice recommended in all three of the steps. Go see a mental health professional or pastor who can help you.

Remember that suicidal thinking is usually associated with problems that can be solved. If you cannot think of solutions, mental health professionals, pastors, and even friends can help to find a solution. Your suicidal crisis is a temporary one, and once you get past the problem facing you, it will not look as big as it does now. Ties to family or friends, your relationship with God, and dreams for the future will provide meaning and satisfaction in life in the future.

The goal of the American Association of Suicidology is to understand and prevent suicide. The website www.suicidology.org has reliable information in their fact sheets about suicide.

36

...about Trauma, PTSD, and CISD

You may look at this title and say, “I’ve experienced some traumatic things as a missionary, but what in the world are PTSD and CISD? Does trauma affect children like it does adults? What happens to those who help the traumatized? Is there anything we can do to help prevent serious problems following trauma?”

What is trauma?

People who respond with intense fear, helplessness or horror when they are confronted with something that involves the threat of death or serious injury to themselves or others experience trauma. This may be something people actually experienced themselves or something they witnessed.

Although this can happen to anyone anywhere in the world in the form of accident, assault, rape, etc., missionaries in some cultures are more likely to have such experiences, and less likely to have someone who knows how to help them at the most crucial time. Missionaries are often more likely to experience conflicts, such as guerilla warfare, coups, and evacuations. They may also be more likely to live where natural disasters, such as typhoons, earthquakes, and volcanic eruptions, occur frequently. They may also live through epidemics, such as cholera, typhoid, or malaria. Terrorism, kidnapping, and being held hostage are more common in mission

settings. If missionaries do not experience the trauma firsthand, they often witness it in national friends.

What is PTSD?

Although nearly everyone living through such events has some symptoms for a week or two, some have much longer-lasting minor symptoms that do not interfere with their lives. However, some experiencing severe trauma develop Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and their symptoms are.

- Reexperiencing the traumatic event in the form of having recurring images or thoughts, or distressing dreams, feeling as if the event is happening again, and reacting physiologically to stimuli associated with the event or similar to the event
- Avoiding things associated with the trauma, such as conversations, activities, places, people or feeling detached from others, unable to experience emotions, and unable to remember significant parts of the trauma
- Experiencing symptoms of increased arousal, such as being easily startled, unable to sleep, irritable or angry, and having difficulty concentrating

These symptoms may occur immediately or be delayed for months or years. They may last for a few months or for many years. PTSD has been called combat fatigue and shell shock when found among the military in combat.

What is CISD?

Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD) is a method of helping prevent PTSD from developing in someone who has experienced trauma. CISD is a structured group meeting ideally conducted by a trained professional between 24 and 72 hours after the crisis. A day is needed for the shock and numbness to wear off and for the people to rest and attend to immediate needs. After three days people begin to “seal off” emotionally and distance themselves from the trauma. Unfortunately, with airline scheduling problems, needed

visas, lack of funds, etc., trained professionals may not be available within 72 hours, so those present **but not directly involved in the crisis** may want to deal with trying to prevent PTSD. Here are the outlines of a CISD which usually takes two or three hours.

- **Introduction.** Explain the purpose of CISD, discuss what will and will not be held confidential, make sure that only those directly involved in the crisis are present and that all directly involved are present, give opportunity for questions, and have prayer together. (If some do not want to participate, point out to them that they may not need help, but they may be helpful to others in the group.)
- **History.** If the people involved know each other well, this step may be omitted. However, if they are not part of an already established group, having each one briefly give a personal testimony, family history, personal background (education, work, marriage, children, happiest times, most stressful times, strengths, and weaknesses) may be helpful.
- **Facts.** Ask each member of the group to tell about what happened and what his or her role was. This may include anything from watching helplessly as someone died to pulling people from the wreckage and saving their lives.
- **Thoughts.** Ask members of the group to give the first thought they remember after they stopped behaving automatically. It may be something as simple as worrying about a pet or as complex as wondering what would happen to their child if they died.
- **Reactions.** Ask each person to talk at a more emotional level about his or her experience, perhaps by asking, “What was the worst part of it for you?”
- **Symptoms.** Ask members to describe any symptoms they experienced during and after the event, such as disturbed sleep, lack of appetite, or poor concentration.
- **Spiritual struggles.** Experiencing trauma may impact members’ faith in God or concept of God. Indicate that it is safe to report questions about God. You may want to pray with them, even repeat some of the Psalms of David as he questioned God.

- **Education.** Summarize the meeting and note that their symptoms are normal for anyone who has experienced severe stress; then give them some techniques to help reduce stress. Tell briefly about PTSD and note that common reactions to trauma are feelings of anger, anxiety, denial, depression, guilt, grief, tension, and gastrointestinal problems.
- **Referral.** Finally, encourage participants who experience continuing problems to see a mental health professional for CISM (Critical Incident Stress Management), because you have just given first aid, not full treatment.

What about children and trauma?

Children are also affected by trauma and need care much like adults. Parents, teachers, pastors, and friends of the family may be most helpful to children.

- The presence of supportive loving adults is the greatest need of traumatized children. Children find the greatest comfort in knowing that they will not be left alone, that someone will be there for them whenever needed.
- Children need to be given enough information to comfort them, but not so many details that it increases the trauma. Always tell children the truth; covering up the facts leads to distrust later on.
- Like adults, children need to be able to process what has happened to them with other children their own age. Also like adults, they need a facilitator present—a supportive, loving adult.

The general health of the family influences how severely the trauma will affect the child. Children from dysfunctional families are much more vulnerable to the effects of traumatic situations.

Does debriefing affect the helpers?

Yes. The debriefers must be debriefed. Leading a debriefing is an emotionally draining experience, and anyone doing it is very likely to experience the very symptoms they have heard others describe. They need some way to process what they have been

through themselves, again within 24-72 hours. If not, the debriefers may well experience compassion fatigue and become cynical themselves.

This does not need to be another full CISD but may be an informal way to talk through what has happened to them. They should have people praying for them. They should not schedule other emotionally demanding events after the debriefing so that they will have time themselves to debrief. If possible, the debriefers should work in pairs so that they can get together later and debrief each other.

What can we do to prevent trauma?

Your agency should have contingency plans for potentially traumatizing situations. Decisions should already be made on such questions as to whether or not ransom will be paid, who will go to help people in traumatic situations, who will speak for the mission during crisis times, and so forth.

You should know how to act to minimize danger. For example, you should know where flash floods are likely to occur, and avoid those roads when you see clouds in the mountains. Or how do you tag your luggage? “Dr. Jonathan Q. Smith, PhD, Executive Director, Important Mission International” is a much more inviting target for hostage takers than is “John Smith, 123 The Lane.”

You should know what to do if a potentially dangerous situation occurs. For example, what do you do if an earthquake occurs? Running from a brick building is not wise. What do you do if you are taken hostage? Those early minutes of captivity are some of the most dangerous, and resistance in the face of overwhelming odds may result in your becoming a corpse.

We live in a fallen world, and trauma cannot always be avoided. However, by using the best resources that we have available and the spiritual resources that God supplies, we can emerge from the situation only scarred to some extent, but not total casualties.

37

...about Healing of Memories

You may have had a difficult experience at some time in your life and its effects are still with you. This may have been something that was apparent to others present, such as physical or verbal abuse in your family. It may have been hurt that no one else realized, such as being laughed at for your answer in first grade. Sometimes people need God’s spirit to bring healing to these damaged emotions, healing of memories.

The story of Joseph, a third culture kid and cross-cultural worker, is found in the last ten chapters of Genesis. As a teenager his jealous brothers hated him so much they couldn’t even say a kind word to him, they plotted to kill him, and they actually sold him into slavery. The emotional baggage from these experiences was apparent in chapters 42, 43, and 45 where Joseph was unable to control his weeping when he saw those brothers decades later.

You may have experienced similar things at some time in your life, and the emotions related to them still influence you years later. You may have prayed about the situation and tried to forget about it, but the feelings are still there—the emotional part of forgiveness has not taken place.

Following are steps that can lead to healing of these memories. God does not give you amnesia about the events; however, he can remove the damaged emotions the memories arouse. You may be able to walk through these steps yourself, or you may find it helpful to have someone else guide you through them as a friend.

Thank God for gifts given.

The first step is to thank God for the gifts he has given you. This is not an ego trip or bragging. It is simply a matter of recognizing that God has blessed you with good things in life. He may have given you athletic ability so that you can kick or throw a ball more accurately than others. He may have given you intellectual capacity to grasp abstract concepts that most other people cannot understand. He may have given you musical talent for a particular instrument or a voice that can sing beautifully. He may have given you a face that others in your culture see as beautiful or handsome. He may have given you a personality that others like to be around or the ability to relate so well that people want to be your friend. The list goes on and on.

When talking with his brothers more than two decades after they had mistreated him (Genesis 45), Joseph pointed out that God had sent him on ahead to save their lives. He noted that God had made him “father to Pharaoh, lord of his entire household, and ruler of all Egypt.” He said to tell their father about the honor given to him in Egypt. These were not boasting, just statements of fact. He told his brothers not to be angry with themselves because God used what they did for good in his life—and in theirs.

Think of yourself made in God’s image and thank him for making you. If you are going through these steps alone, it is best to actually write down the good things God has given you.

If someone is there with you, talk about gifts together and rejoice in what God has given. People with the severest damage to their emotions may be the ones who most need someone else with them. These others may be able to identify gifts or blessings taken for granted—overlooked because the person is so focused on the damage.

Ask God about healing.

The second step is to ask God what he wants to heal in you. Sometimes we want to be healed just to have fewer tensions or to live

up to what someone else expects of us. Our motivation must be to become more like Christ, and we want to be sure that we really want to be healed—regardless of what other people think.

Sometimes God seems to delay the time of healing. Although Joseph was in charge of the prison, he still wanted to get out (Genesis 40). After he interpreted the dream Joseph asked the cupbearer to mention him to the Pharaoh when things improved. The cupbearer forgot—and Joseph waited two more years.

Sometimes God does not heal. Paul, another cross-cultural worker, asked God for something three times, and God never removed the “thorn in the flesh.” God just told Paul that his grace was enough—that God’s power was made complete without removing the thorn (2 Corinthians 12).

Share the memory with God.

The third step is to share the memory with God, the painful memory that keeps you from being healed. Rather than concentrating on the current problem such as fear of people (because you were abused as a child) or difficulty speaking in public (because you were laughed at in first grade), go back to the memory of the original event causing the problem.

We have no record of Joseph doing this, but he certainly could have done so. He had those memories available as we can see in his comments to the cupbearer (Genesis 40), “For I was forcibly carried off from the land of the Hebrews, and even here I have done nothing to deserve being put in a dungeon.”

Paul had had many painful memories, such as being beaten, stoned, and shipwrecked, and he shared not only with God but with believers in the church in the chapter just before he wrote about God’s grace being sufficient (2 Corinthians 11).

When you share that memory with God, the emotions associated with it will be aroused again. This is to be expected. Remember that you are looking for the healing of these damaged emotions. They have to be brought to the surface again even though the experience is painful.

Replace the hurt with love.

The fourth step is to replace the hurt with love by forgiving those involved in the painful memory as God would forgive them. Even though the people causing that hurt may no longer be alive, you must forgive them unconditionally—not dependent on the other person’s changing and becoming worthy. When you do this, you can focus not on the hurt, but on change and growth.

By the time he revealed who he was (to his brothers) 22 years after they hurt him, Joseph had forgiven them. He told them not to be distressed and angry with themselves (Genesis 45). Seventeen years later (39 years after the offense), at the death of their father, his brothers still thought that Joseph had not really forgiven them, and they asked for his forgiveness. Joseph wept as he realized they had still not accepted his forgiveness. Showing that he had replaced the hurt with love, he reassured them and spoke kindly to them. He told them not to be afraid, that he would provide for them and their children (Genesis 50).

Replacing the hurt with love requires both deciding with your mind to forgive and letting God help you with the emotional part of forgiveness—healing damaged emotions. This is not “forgive and forget.” The memory remains, but the associated emotion changes and does not affect your thoughts and actions.

Become thankful for the memory.

The fifth step is to become thankful for that painful memory. Because you believe that all things work together for good, now is the time to look for the good in this situation. For example, your abuse as a child may have made you particularly compassionate toward other abused children and made you very effective in helping them. Or being laughed at in first grade and your not speaking in public may have encouraged you to develop other methods of communication, such as writing or painting.

Joseph did this when he revealed himself to his brothers. He pointed out that God had used their hurtful act to save lives, to preserve their family (Genesis 45). He reiterated this seventeen years later when he told them, “You intended to harm me, but God intended it to save our lives” (Genesis 50). If they had not sold him into slavery, they all (including him) would have died along with thousands of others in the famine in that part of the world.

This thankfulness is what Paul wrote about in 1 Thessalonians 5 where he said, “Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.” We can do this with joy not only because it is God’s will, but also because we know that he works for good in all things.

Thank God for healing.

Finally, you thank God for healing and go ahead acting as the healed person you are. Remember that the healing is from God, and we accept it by faith. When God has given you this gift, you can go out and pass it on to others while keeping it yourself. Since he has set you free, you can help to set others free, setting in motion grace and love to everyone.

When sending out the twelve their first time to spread the good news, Jesus said, “Freely you have received, freely give” (Matthew 10:8). The root word for “gift” appears three times in this statement so that it literally says, “Giftwise you have received, giftwise give.” Since you have received this wonderful gift, you can go out and give it to others.

Conclusion

Some, or all, of these steps may need to be repeated as other memories surface. The Spirit may bring some of these up at unexpected times, and God stands ready to heal.

38

...about Passive-Aggressive Behavior

Suppose this happened to a missionary. His committee report to the field director is due this afternoon, and he still has not received John's data that was due a week ago. He wonders what John's excuse will be this time—last time he forgot when it was due, the time before that he had not followed instructions so the data was useless, the time before that... When John gets it in, he will probably complain about how no one appreciates what he does, or that other people don't have to gather data, or that... He will probably come in angry and try to start an argument—then return tomorrow to say that he is sorry, ask forgiveness, and promise to do better next time.

The missionary and John have served together for nearly four years now, and the story is always basically the same. Only the details change. What the missionary is facing is the passive-aggressive behavior of a colleague, something quite common among missionaries and other Christians. Since they do not feel free to express their dissatisfaction, such people do things that, in effect, sabotage the project.

What is passive-aggressive behavior?

People who appear to support the requests of others but do not perform the requested action correctly or soon enough are displaying passive-aggressive behavior. They may even seem to be enthusiastic about the idea, but they use overt behavior to express what they do

not want to say verbally. Rather than expressing their opposition in words, they use procrastination, forgetfulness, and inefficiency to avoid complying with the request.

Along with the passive resistance these people have a pattern of negative attitudes. They may complain about feeling cheated, unappreciated, and misunderstood as they blame their failures on others. They may be sullen, irritable, cynical, and argumentative. Some professionals have characterized passive-aggressive behavior as “hostile cooperation,” “angry kindness,” or “covert assertiveness.” This behavior appears most often in the workplace and in social situations, but it may also occur in marriage and/or family situations.

Is it a psychological disorder?

For many years both the World Health Organization (agency of the United Nations) and the American Psychiatric Association listed Passive-Aggressive Personality Disorder. However, in 1994 the American Psychiatric association removed passive-aggressive from the list of disorders and placed it in an appendix of items for further study.

Therefore, most nations consider it as a disorder, but mental health professionals in the USA do not. However, even if it is not a disorder, passive-aggressive behavior is very difficult to cope with. The American Psychiatric Association's manual of mental disorders (DSM-IV) does list seven “Research criteria for passive-aggressive personality disorder,” and a person must have at least four of these criteria to be considered passive-aggressive.

Is it in the Bible?

Most people look at the lost (prodigal) son who returned to his father as the focus of that story in Luke 15. However, his older brother also had major problems. Even though he is not labeled as “passive-aggressive,” the older son meets six of the seven DSM-IV criteria in just three short verses.

- Resisted carrying out routine social tasks: he refused to go to his brother's party (v. 28).
- Complained of being unappreciated by others: his father never gave him a party (v. 29).
- Was sullen and argumentative: he argued with his father (v. 29).
- Criticized and scorned authority: he criticized his father's party for the squandering son (v. 30).
- Expressed envy and resentment toward those more fortunate: he resented that the fatted calf was killed for his brother (v. 30).
- Voiced exaggerated complaints of personal misfortune: he had "slaved" for years (v. 29)

The only criterion he did not meet was the one saying that he alternated between defiance and contrition!

What are the symptoms?

By definition the passive-aggressive person has (1) a pattern of passive resistance to carrying out requested actions and (2) a pattern of negativistic attitudes (an alternate name is negativistic personality disorder).

As noted above, the DSM-IV criteria elaborated these two general conditions into seven more specific criteria. The following are even more specific passive-aggressive actions.

- Deliberate inefficiency, dawdling, laziness, inflexibility, ignoring of others
- Procrastination, stubbornness, resisting suggestions, disregarding instructions
- Pretending forgetfulness, putting things on the "back burner," making excuses
- Losing things, discovering things too late,
- Sullenness, hostility, anger, argumentativeness
- Complaining, resentment, feeling unappreciated, irritableness, cynicism
- Blaming others, feeling cheated
- Overt sabotage, sulking

- Working poorly or slowly, being tardy or absent
- Repeatedly apologizing, asking forgiveness and promising to do better next time—but not really changing

The list can go on and on. Whether they are conscious of it or not, the goal is to do something that slows or prevents the action from being done or undermines the success of others.

Who can be passive-aggressive?

Anyone who is in a relationship with you may be passive-aggressive toward you.

- It may be someone above you, such as your field director, a mentor, a committee chair, or an administrator in the home office.
- It may be someone below you, such as a student in your class, a new missionary you are orienting, or your own child or adolescent.
- It may be someone at your own level, such as a fellow missionary, a colleague where you teach, a friend, or even your spouse.

The higher the commitment and the closer the relationship, the more the passive-aggressive behavior will affect your life. For example, if your spouse or teenager does not want missionary life, it will disrupt your life more than if a student in your class or a new missionary is unhappy.

Missionaries may show passive-aggressive behavior to avoid the stress of confrontation. In 1983 Dorothy Gish asked 547 missionaries to rate 65 items that cause stress, and "confronting others when necessary" was the one rated most stressful. Sixteen years later Joan Carter repeated the study with the same items plus some additional ones. The 306 missionaries still placed confronting others at the top of the list.

Passive-aggressive behavior can stop a project just like confrontation can, but it can do so with less stress. Missionaries who do not want to oppose a program overtly can just not get their part done so that the project fails. After that they can apologize for their tardiness, ask forgiveness, and they have still accomplished what they wanted in the first place.

What can you do?

Remember that this pattern of behavior has “worked” for many years for the passive-aggressive people. Even though their behavior has an impact on you it is not *about* you. Do not take it personally. Your goal is to create a climate of safe and open communication. The following may help.

- Keep an open mind, avoid being defensive, and acknowledge that some of the concerns may be legitimate.
- Be empathetic but still request more appropriate behavior.
- Concretely define what you expect, and ask the person to paraphrase your wants.
- Do not accept, excuse, or reward poor performance.
- Tactfully challenge distortions but do not argue over them.
- Make sure that he or she understands that you care for him or her personally and are not just seeking control.
- Remember that if you become viewed as an opponent, the objectionable behavior is likely to increase.

Finally, if you do not succeed, do not blame yourself. If people do not want to change, they do not. Remember that you did not cause the passive-aggressive behavior.

What if you are passive-aggressive?

People who are passive-aggressive may not realize that they are engaging in a self-defeating, objectionable behavior. The Spirit may have revealed to you that you use this habitual and problematic behavior yourself. If you recognize this troublesome behavior interfering with your own work or relationships, there is much hope.

- You may be able to change your passive-aggressive behavior by “observing” yourself and making changes in your own behavior, asking God to help.
- You may want to ask a friend to help you. It is much easier for people to recognize such behavior in others, so the observations of a good friend may give good insights.

- You may want to see a counselor to help you identify and change your behavior. Cognitive-behavioral therapy may help you become aware of such behavior and minimize it.

39

...about Whistleblowing

Whistleblowers are people who expose information or activities that are illegal, unethical or not viewed as correct within their organization. They may bring the allegations to the surface either within the organization, by telling a supervisor, or reporting the problem to someone outside the organization, such as calling the police. Such people risk retaliations from those they accuse.

Most people do not want to even know about evil activities because knowing puts them in no-win situations. However, when they do find out, they must make choices, and even doing nothing is making a choice.

Boarding schools during the last century have provided some examples of consequences when people failed to be whistleblowers. These examples may help us know what to do, so we will consider both Christian and secular boarding schools. Here we are primarily interested in considering missionaries serving in mission agencies.

A Christian (missionary) Boarding School Overseas

The most widely known instance of the lack of whistleblowers in the 20th century is one of the abuse of children in a boarding school. This abuse involved missionary kids over the span of a century.

- 1920s. Mamou Alliance Academy began in West Africa, and it continued until 1971. This involved 200 children from several agencies, students who came from hundreds of miles away and remained at Mamou nine months each year.
- 1950s. It is not clear when abuse began at Mamou, but it was rampant there by the 1950s when 10-year-old Wes Stafford became a

whistleblower. As he was boarding the plane in New York on his way back to school in Africa, he told his mother that the staff there beat students all the time for everything. He was sobbing and pleading with her not to send him back. His father and some other fathers pressured their agencies about problems, and they finally began another boarding school; however, it was fully three decades before adequate changes occurred.

- 1990s. During the late 1980s the agency began receiving many reports that students were slapped, punched, fondled, and raped. In the 1990s a committee of 30 alumni met with the agency. Thorough investigations were conducted, and changes were made. *Christianity Today* published several articles about it during the next 15 years.

Secular Private Boarding Schools in the USA

During 2016 the *Boston Globe* published a series titled “Private schools, painful secrets.” The *Globe’s* series found that 67 private schools in New England had more than 200 students who were sexually abused by staffers. Abuse of students over a long period is not limited to Christian boarding schools. Here is an example.

Choate Rosemary Hall is an elite Connecticut boarding school with alumni such as John F. Kennedy, Ivanka Trump, and other well-known individuals. In 2017 the school admitted to sexual abuse of students by staff between 1963 and 2010. In April they made a 50-page report from an independent firm to the Board of Trustees available on-line. The report names 12 former teachers and how each teacher victimized one or more of 24 students ranging from groping to rape.

The investigation showed that when people reported sexual abuse the Choate officials handled such complaints secretly. They received many complaints over the years; however, Choate did not make any reports to Department of Children and Families about adult sexual misconduct.

What does the Bible say?

Jesus was a whistleblower throughout his ministry. John describes his clearing the temple near the beginning of Jesus’ ministry (John 2:12-17). Luke describes a similar clearing of the temple at the end of his ministry (Luke 19:45-46). Matthew devotes all of chapter 23 to Jesus telling the crowds and his disciples about the teachers of the law and the Pharisees.

Seven times he starts a section of the chapter with the words, “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees....” He simply would not let religious leaders go on with their usual practices.

Whistleblowing among missionaries began with Paul shortly after the first term of missionary service in Acts 15. After he and Barnabas returned to their sending church, some men came to it and were promoting some faulty theology. Paul confronted these men and finally went to Jerusalem to report it to headquarters. After much discussion, those at headquarters agreed with Paul’s theology.

Later a personnel problem occurred in which a missionary had a spiritual problem. Paul wrote to Philemon (verse 24) about Demas as a “fellow worker.” Paul also sent greetings from Demas to the Colossians (4:14), another positive thing about Demas. However, something happened with Demas so that Paul wrote to Timothy, a missionary pastor that Demas had deserted him because he loved this world, and Demas had gone to Thessalonica. Paul asked Timothy to come see him and bring Mark since Demas had left (2 Timothy 4:9-11).

Those who report

Wess Stafford, author of *Too Small to Ignore: Why the Least of These Matters Most*, was called to stand before his 70 classmates at Mamou when he was ten years old. The students were told that Wess was Satan’s favorite tool. Now his mother was not able to do her work on the field, and Africans would be in hell because of him. Then Wess was forced to hold a candle lighted at both ends so that it burned toward his fingers which blistered until a first grader knocked the candle out of his fingers.

People who become whistleblowers often find that harmful things occur: however, in long run they feel satisfaction that they did the right thing. Laws exist in the USA to protect whistleblowers, but those laws are not always applied, and it may be impossible to prove the wrong. The list of possible consequences is endless, but some common ones are listed here.

- Reprisal or retaliation
- Legal action, social stigma, or humiliation
- Firings or transferals to insignificant work
- Accused of being unethical or breaking promises

Those who do not report

The rest of the students at Mamou and all of the staff, (except for one junior teacher who was told to mind her own business) failed to report the abuse. The abuse continued for decades and involved more than 200 students. All went on as usual. As Wess put it in his book, years later, “The hall became a jumble of shrieks, pleas, cracks of the belt, and wailing children” (p. 134).

Some may ask why siblings did not report, but we must remember that these children were threatened with beatings themselves. They were told that if they told anyone they would destroy parents’ ministry, and Africans would go to hell. Wess said that his sister knew his cry, and she shed many tears every week for her brother.

Not reporting may seem best because one avoids the immediate consequences like being beaten or losing one’s position; however, later even worse things can occur.

Some of these later bad things include:

- Feeling guilt or shame when others suffer
- Dealing with rejection by others
- Dealing with legal issues that arise
- Wondering what God thinks of failure to respond and wondering if they had sinned

What can we do?

Of course, we must listen to the whistleblowers, especially children. Although they may fabricate stories, we must take time to check the stories out rather than ignoring them. Wess’s parents both took action even though they had questions about what he had said.

We must also break the silence and inform others as well as reporting to the authorities. Perpetrators are likely to look for similar positions. Some of the Mamou teachers found other teaching positions, and the new employers did not know what they had done--and were likely to do again.

Most important of all is to get rid of the secrets. Remember that the *Boson Globe* titled its series “Private schools, painful secrets.” That title states what we must do. We must do away with the secrets.

Although this is generally true, it is especially important with sexual abuse. Physician Walt Larimore wrote *Bryson City Secrets* because his two

children requested it, and they urged him again when he was reluctant. They had both been sexually abused by a babysitter, and they had told their parents the next afternoon. Walt immediately called Social Services, and the children were interviewed by counselors that afternoon and later as well.

After consulting with a lawyer, a theologian, and another professional as well as other trusted friends, he and his wife prayerfully decided to move to Florida where he had found a position. In a matter of weeks they moved.

Everything seemed to go well for nearly two decades. Both children were nearing the end of college, and one November evening Walt and his wife received a phone call from one of their children (now 24) pleading for them to come visit for Thanksgiving because of thoughts about the perpetrator. Five days later the whole family met in Washington D. C. for the holiday, and they thoroughly discussed the continuing consequences of abuse.

They met again for Christmas, and both children convinced Walt to tell their story to help others who have been abused. They hoped others could also find the healing they were beginning to experience. It is never too late to break the silence.

Part 4.

Family and Sexuality

In many sending countries the family seems to be disintegrating as the divorce rate increased during the 20th century. In addition the incidence of sex before marriage increased at the same time. These changes have had an impact on the missionary force. The chapter about adolescence shows how adolescence itself is a cultural invention of the last century and a half. The chapters about separation because of ministry responsibilities and other kinds of sexual stress give suggestions for building stronger marriage relationships and avoiding marriage breakups.

Email and the Internet are wonderful ways of disseminating information, but too often it is the wrong kind of information. Pornography and Internet relationships are now available to anyone, anytime, almost anywhere. The chapter about such immorality gives suggestions to avoid sin in this ever available, affordable, anonymous situation. No one likes to talk about sexual abuse by people in ministry, but recent events in the Roman Catholic church have brought it into our awareness. Unfortunately, it also sometimes occurs among missionaries, and the chapter about sexual abuse notes ways to spot it and gives suggestions about what to do.

40

...about Children's Adjustment

People living and working in other cultures may think that they do not need to give much thought to taking their preschool and primary children along. Parents may think that although the children may not want to go, they will soon adjust and be happy in the new culture.

Although this scenario is often the case, it is not always so. Children who do not want to go sometimes never adjust, refuse to learn the language, refuse to make friends, and talk about going home for years.

Parents can increase the likelihood that their preadolescent children will make the transitions to and from the host culture successfully. Following are suggestions that may increase the chances of your child having a good experience in another country.

On your mark! (Parenting)

Probably the most important factor in the adjustment of children is the relationship between their parents. Someone has said, "The best thing a father can do for his children is to love their mother." Although parents may not realize it, children are aware when problems exist between their parents.

Living in another culture is difficult for any marriage, so if you have not developed good methods of communication and resolving conflict, please take time to do so before going. Then you will be able to adequately do the following P's of Parenting:

- Presence. Parents are available for children. Of course, there will be times of separation, but when not out of town, parents should "schedule" time with their children.
- Provision. Parents provide for their children's needs, not only financial and physical needs but also spiritual, relational, and emotional ones.
- Protection. Parents protect children by setting boundaries and by administering consequences as well as by their physical presence in times of danger.
- Permission. Parents give permission to express emotions in age-appropriate ways as well as to try new things and take risks.

Get set! (Preparation)

Although children need not be involved when the idea of serving cross-culturally first comes up, they want to have their voice heard as a part of the family when it is seriously discussed. Talking with them about it is vitally important rather than just telling them they are going. Even preschool children can process an amazing amount of information and should be included when considering the move. In addition to generally talking about the move, talk about specific things in their new culture and experience parts of it if possible.

- Talk about the food they will be eating when there.
- Cook some of the food while still at home.
- If possible eat at a restaurant that serves such food, and let the children hear the language and see the actions and appearance of the cooks and servers.
- Talk about the place the family will be living and look at pictures of it.
- If children are in school, talk about their school and look at pictures of it.

In all of this, stress positive things about the move and discuss options open to them months in advance of the move.

Go! (Packing)

When you are packing and realize that you cannot possibly take everything you planned, be very careful to let children have a voice in what you leave behind. The following “worn out” or “insignificant” items may be very important to a child:

- An torn blanket
- A wrinkled picture
- A broken toy
- A ragged teddy bear

You may tell a child to leave a cherished teddy bear behind and you will get him or her a new one when you get there. Although that sounds good, it may be the emotional equivalent of someone telling you to leave your baby at home because you can always have another one when you get there.

If you are into the popular pastime of scrapbooking, be sure to take some of those scrapbooks along. They can be invaluable for keeping memories alive. Photo albums are great as well. If you are really cramped for space, remember that in this digital age you may still have the photos in your computer or burned on a CD that can be taken along easily because it is so small and weighs only ounces.

Goodbyes are very important. We tend to say goodbye to people, but we also need to bid farewell to other things as well:

- Places. Take your child to school to tell it goodbye, then to the church, then to the park, and so forth.
- Pets. A cat, a dog, or even a fish may seem like a part of the family to a child. He or she needs to tell it goodbye and see who will be caring for it.
- Possessions. You obviously cannot take everything your children have, so let them give their things away (or sell them at a yard sale) so that they know who will have them.

Life there (Possibilities)

Once you arrive the choices may seem endless where children are involved. You may want your children to play with the national

children who live nearby. However, your children have so many strange things to adjust to that the thought of playing with boys and girls who do not speak their language may be daunting at first.

You may want your children to learn the national language as children so that they can speak it without an accent and think in it like you can never do. However, still mastering the intricacies of their own language, they may find the new language confusing and not want to learn it.

You may want your children to take in the incredible scenery of the surrounding countryside or the important historical monuments and buildings in your area. However, they would rather play in the sandbox in the back yard.

The number of potential choices may seem endless, and you will have to use your own judgment. However, remember that there is a big difference between your spending time with your children and their spending time with you.

- If you are all doing something they want to do (play in the sandbox), you are spending time with them.
- If you are all doing something you want to do (seeing the monuments), they are doing something with you.

Of course, you do not have to do everything with them, but be sure that you do enough “somethings” with them. Better to end up with good memories of the sandbox than with bad memories of the monuments.

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.

“Home” again (Passport country)

When you return to your passport country, it is similar to going originally to your host country. However, just reentering your “home” culture may be more difficult than the original change in cultures—much to the surprise of the children. In addition, your children are now several years older than they were then, and the issues may be quite different. Here are some of the factors that may affect reentry.

- Age. One child who went as a child may be coming back as an adolescent and have progressed to a different way of thinking. Another child who could barely talk is now in school.
- Personality. Each child is an individual, and the extrovert who is energized being with people may respond quite differently from the introvert who wants to be alone.
- Experience. One child who had a difficult time entering the host culture may dread going home while the other who loved the transition eagerly anticipates it.
- Third culture kids. Your children who were from one culture have now internalized another. However they do not really feel a part of either, they are TCKs.
- Reason for leaving. If going home at this time was on the schedule, it is quite different from one that is a forced premature departure.

- Your attitude. If you, as parents, are eagerly looking forward to going home, your children will have a different attitude than if you want to stay.
- Education. If your children are at “natural breaks” in their education (between elementary and middle school) it may be easier than if they are leaving just a year before that break would occur.

Considering all these issues in your decisions will likely enable your children to have a better international experience.

41

...about 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.

42

...about “Helicopter Parents”

The field had eagerly anticipated Paul’s coming to serve with them. He had become a Christian during his teens, was active in his church, had a clear call to missions, did well in his Bible major, and had great references from his professors at the university.

However, they were disappointed to find out that Paul was unable to get to work on time, did not know how to budget money, and did not relate well to his mentor. He had been unable to set up his own apartment, keep it clean, and did not know how to prepare his own food.

Although Paul had hundreds of “friends” on Facebook and Skyped daily with his parents back home, he did not relate well face-to-face. He looked good “on paper,” but Paul did not function well in real life as a missionary. Much of his problem was due to living in the 21st century and having helicopter parents.

What are “helicopter parents”?

Helicopter parents are called that because they are always hovering around their children, rarely out of reach. There have always been overprotective parents, but not as many, not as blatant, and not extending “childhood” for such a long time as some parents do now. The term was invented in the 20th century, and became widely used around the beginning of the 21st century as college administrators began using it to refer to parents of some students.

New technology, especially the cell phone, has made it possible for parents and “children” to remain constantly connected for many years. Today, if university students do not want to take a course suggested by their advisors, they can (and do) pull out their cell phones and have mom or dad talk to the advisor.

These overparented students are now graduating and moving into the workplace—and into missions. In 2007, Michigan State University did a survey called “Parent Involvement in the College Recruiting Process: To What extent?” This survey of 725 employers found that about a third of the large employers and about a quarter of smaller employers (60-3700 employees) reported experiencing “parent involvement.” Here are the types of such involvement reported:

- Getting information about the company (40%)
- Submitting resume (31%)
- Promoting son or daughter (26%)
- Attending career fair (17 %)

Some employers who contacted students with good resumes found that the students knew nothing about it and had no desire to work for the company! Four percent reported that a parent attended the interview!

What does the Bible say about helicopter parents?

Of course, no one in the Bible is labeled as being a helicopter parent, but back in Genesis Rebekah, mother of Esau and Jacob, is a good example. She liked Jacob better than Esau, so she always looked out for him. Her overprotection was most obvious when Isaac was about to give Esau his blessing as firstborn. By that time the “boys” were both over 40 years old (Genesis 26:34).

Rebekah eavesdropped on their conversation when Isaac asked Esau to bring him food (Genesis 27).

- She told Jacob what she overheard (v. 6).
- She told Jacob to kill two goats so she could cook them the way Isaac liked (v. 8).
- She told him to take the food to Isaac to get Esau’s blessing (v. 9).

- When Jacob objected, she called for the curse to fall on her, that he should “Just do what I say” (v. 13).
- She cooked the goats, and she put Esau’s clothes on Jacob (v. 15).
- She put goatskins on Jacob’s hands and neck and gave him the food for Isaac (v. 16).
- When she heard that Esau was furious, she told Jacob what Esau was planning (v. 42).
- She told Jacob to go and stay with her brother, Laban, until Esau calmed down (vv. 43-44).
- Then she promised to let Jacob know when Esau was over it so he could come back home (v. 45).

Does that sound like a helicopter parent?

How do they affect my team?

Children of helicopter parents may not be able to function on their own because their parents have always taken care of them. Even while in college their mothers still phone them to get out of bed, and their fathers call their professors whenever there is a problem. They have never learned basic life skills about how to live on their own and relate to people in real life.

Without independent living skills and wanting to be served rather than to serve, they may become “high maintenance” on the field. This may require large investments of time by people on the field, and other missionaries may become enablers of the immaturity and irresponsibility of the children of helicopter parents.

Being asked to use their time to “care for” such individuals who not only accept but also expect help doing everyday tasks is likely to make other missionaries unhappy as their own projects begin to lag. This may result in low morale or anger across the field.

How do they affect me as a parent?

Your own children may expect more of you when they see what you and other missionaries do for the children of helicopter

parents living on the field. If you fold clothes and sweep floors for others their own age, why do they have to do that for themselves?

When your child goes to college, he or she may expect you to do what helicopter parents do for their children back “home.” When you take them to the campus and they see other parents setting up rooms for their children and calling them to get out of bed, they may want you to do the same for them. Your own children may feel that you don’t love them if you refuse.

The rise of helicopter parents is one of the reasons for the origin of the parents’ orientation you are likely to be asked to attend. Trying to think of something to keep parents out of student orientation and advising, many colleges and universities finally came up with the idea of parents’ orientation, which is nearly always offered at the same time as student orientation.

What can we do?

Problems like this can usually be solved by prevention, correction, or some combination of the two.

Naomi Singer (pseudonym) suggested prevention as a possibility in “Life Skills & Assessing New Candidates” in the July, 2012 issue of *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* (EMQ). She suggested assessing several life skills including whether a candidate:

- Demonstrates responsible, independent living.
- Has practical work skills.
- Handles money and resources well.
- Is skilled socially.
- Has personal disciplines.

These things can be measured by some of the following means:

- Ask someone who has lived with the candidate to fill out a life skills evaluation.
- Engage field workers to make life skills checklists for their field.
- Have candidates self-evaluate on a checklist.
- Require candidates to have lived independently and worked for someone else several years before serving on the field.

One of the disadvantages of rejecting people until they develop life skills is that in the process of developing those skills, they may become enmeshed in life itself. Those individuals may buy a home so they have a mortgage to pay or that they found or work at a job that they do not want to leave.

Correction by mentoring and/or educating candidates after they become part of the agency is another way to solve the problem created by helicopter parents. Although some correction may come through “education” using books, lectures, and discussion, it is likely that mentoring of some type will be needed. People can read books about parenting, attend seminars about marriage relationships, and engage in discussions about having neat homes, but still not be able to apply that knowledge to their own lives.

Children of helicopter parents may literally need a “life coach.” They do not need someone to talk with them and help them discover their potential nearly as much as they need someone to observe them and then help them to face “life” in the real world of everyday living. Like a football or basketball coach, these coaches may watch the person performing a life skill, such as clean the house, and then suggest and demonstrate better ways. Then the coaches may watch again and make more suggestions, etc. This may be repeated as often as necessary for each deficient skill.

Finally, rather than either the agency or candidate making a long-term commitment, it may be better to have a definite “trial period” to see if both the agency and the candidate work well together. At the end of the time (a year or two), either or both may want to end the relationship, and it can be done without either one “losing face” and without huge investments in time and money being lost by either party.

43

...about Ministry Separation

Whenever people in ministry are separated, disagreements are likely to occur. The most famous case is probably when Thomas refused to believe what the other disciples told him about Jesus’ resurrection (John 20). Of course, the same was true of other disciples as well (Mark 16, Luke 24).

This has especially been true relative to missions. Even after Peter became convinced about the Gospel being for the Gentiles and witnessed them receiving the Holy Spirit (Acts 10), the other early Christians not there at the time were critical of his actions (Acts 11). A major crisis arose in the early church after Paul and Barnabas returned from their first term of missionary service and had not required the Gentile Christians to be circumcised (Acts 15).

These disagreements and misunderstandings still occur today among missionaries in general but may be especially difficult for husbands and wives experiencing separations related to their missionary ministry. In these days of air travel, absences of a few days or a few weeks are very common, as are even longer absences. This is true not only on the field but perhaps even more so when on home assignment. One spouse or the other may be gone nearly every weekend or several weeks at a time raising support. Although these absences may be more frequent today, the reactions of individuals to them have not changed. What are some of the difficulties that may occur? What can be done to minimize these difficulties?

It always happens when you are gone.

For the spouse left at home, it seems like that is the time crises are most likely to occur. A pipe breaks. The car will not start. The computer locks up and will not reboot. The kids get sick. The teacher wants to talk to a parent about a problem at school. The list goes on and on. Whether such things happen more frequently when a spouse is gone or not, they at least seem to. Here are a few steps one can take to cope with this situation.

- Develop a “practical” support group. Make a list of people you can call on to help with the car, the computer, illness, and other problems.
- Use whatever means of communication you have available to contact your spouse. E-mail can usually bring a response in a few hours. A cell phone can often get an immediate response.
- Ask older missionaries who have lived in the same area for suggestions on how they coped with such situations.
- Lower your expectations. Rather than trying to fix everything, let something go.
- See the brochure on anxiety.

I need your stability.

Marriage is about sharing life, and today that is more possible than ever before. When one spouse feels the need to discuss a situation with the other, the sooner they can do that, the better. When both spouses share in the decision, both have responsibility for the outcome. With our varied means of communication one can contact a spouse virtually anywhere within a few hours, and the traveling spouse should make that possible. Do not hesitate to spend whatever money is necessary to communicate. Here are a few ways that can be done.

- Cell phones. Do not turn them off unless absolutely necessary for an agreed on length of time. When you do, return the call as soon as possible.

- E-mail. Check your e-mail on an agreed-on schedule and reply immediately.
- Fax. Leave word with whoever receives your fax messages to get them to you as soon as possible and reply immediately.
- Even if there is no “emergency,” communicate on an agreed schedule.

What about the children?

Children, like spouses, have various reactions to a parent being gone. They may become angry, lonely, moody, disobedient, withdrawn, and so forth. Here are some ways you can cope with these.

- Communicate I. The traveling parent can talk by phone personally, e-mail a message to each child, or add a special message to a fax.
- Communicate II. The parent at home can encourage communication with the children by asking, sharing, and being vulnerable.
- Discipline must be administered immediately, not when the absent parent returns. If possible, spouses should communicate before it is given.
- See the brochure on adolescence.

I get so angry.

The spouse left at home may become angry at the traveling spouse or angry at God. One may feel abandoned, that the absent spouse is gone because she or he really wants to be. Even if agreed to beforehand, one may feel anger at God for calling the spouse away. Such feelings must be faced, and so must thoughts about the absent spouse. Talk with others about them, beginning with the object of your anger. If necessary, with permission, talk with selected others.

- With the spouse
- With God

- With a support group
- With a counselor
- See the brochure on anger

We seem to have less and less in common.

Of course, you do. People involved in different activities become concerned about different issues and develop different interests. A strong marriage requires common interests, and that will require intentionally maintaining these.

- Openly discuss with each other what is happening and what interests you want to nurture together.
- Choose interests that you value in your marriage.
- Choose friends that you each value, people with whom you are both comfortable and have similar interests.

I get so lonely.

Of course you do. You are alone. Both of you are alone, so both of you are likely to be lonely. To combat this, you need to intentionally plan how you will combat the loneliness.

- Tell each other about your loneliness.
- Find activities that help decrease the loneliness. For some it may be watching a video, for others having friends in, and for still others, reading a book.
- Both journal about your feelings of loneliness while apart, and then share your journals with each other when together.
- Communicate frequently via e-mail and telephone.
- See the brochure on loneliness.

I can't believe I'm attracted to ____.

Although being attracted to someone other than your spouse takes many people by surprise the first time it happens, it is very common. This attraction may be either sexual or emotional. As one

song put it, “When I’m not near the girl (guy) I love, I love the girl (guy) I’m near.” Typically we come to like the people we interact with most, which is usually our spouse. If you feel vulnerable in this area, you are. If you do not feel vulnerable, you may be even more vulnerable than those who do feel it. Such attraction must not be tolerated in any way.

- Be honest with yourself about it.
- Be honest with God about it.
- Find an accountability partner (or group) of the same gender to call you regularly to ask for a report.
- See the brochure on sexual stress.

It's so good to have you home, so why are we arguing now?

You have been looking forward to being together for several days or weeks, and now you find yourselves in an argument. What is the problem? Remember that both of you are probably physically and emotionally exhausted from all the things we have discussed. The spouse who stayed at home has been carrying the load usually carried by two people. The spouse who traveled is tired from work, travel, and perhaps jet lag and intestinal disturbances from getting some of the flora and/or fauna from the local water.

- Both of you need to realize what the situation is.
- Both of you need to be especially patient with each other.
- If disagreements begin, it is best to shelve discussion until you both have time to get rested, perhaps taking turns covering for each other while the other rests.
- Celebrate your reunion (when you are rested) in some special way.
- See the brochure on conflict.

We need to talk.

Missionaries, of all people, should know the importance of debriefing. You consider it routine when you reenter your passport country, and it is the same for any transition. Coming home from a

few days or weeks is also a reentry, and you both need the chance to debrief this minor transition. Again, communication is of greatest importance, so debrief each other.

- Look at your journals and tell each other everything about your separation.
- Consider how this fits in to your life story together.
- Decide what changes this may imply for your lives together in the future
- Make specific plans for how you will cope with separation next time.
- See the brochure on reentry.

44

...about Sexual Stress

You and Pat have been working together for several months, but during the last three weeks both of you have been spending every available minute on the big project. You have eaten working lunches together and continued working after the others have gone home for the night. You realize that you are beginning to look forward to going to work more than you ever have before, and this morning when you saw Pat, your heart began to race. Certainly you couldn't be falling in love, could you? You are a missionary, so sexual immorality, adultery, homosexual activity, or incest are not possible, are they? Why do you feel this way? What can you do to prevent this from happening? Let's consider some of these questions.

Me?

Could it happen to you, a missionary? Of course, it could. You are human, aren't you? It is a natural human tendency to grow to like people with whom we spend time, so much so that even people taken hostage often grow to like their captors, and the captors grow to like their hostages. It is even more likely that you will like people with whom you are working, and that liking may become sexual attraction. People can gradually "slide" into sexual sin over a period of time. An example of this is found in the case of Amnon and Tamar where Amnon became obsessed with her "in the course of time" (2 Samuel 13).

Although it is rare, it can be “love (lust) at first sight.” In this case people can “fall” into sexual sin rapidly. An example of this is David and Bathsheba. Rather than being out leading his army where he should have been, David stayed in Jerusalem. Having trouble sleeping, he went for a walk on his roof and noticed a woman bathing. Rather than looking away, he sent someone to find out who she was. Rather than leaving it at knowing who she was, when he found out her husband was out fighting in the army, he had her come over. Then “he slept with her” (2 Samuel 11).

Immorality or adultery?

Could you, a missionary, get pulled into immorality or adultery? Of course you could, and the “slide” into it usually begins in harmless, innocent ways. For example, you are field director, so it is your responsibility to show the attractive new single missionary around. Or, you feel sorry for the new missionaries who have no place to stay, and you invite them to live with you temporarily. Or, while talking with a long-term missionary friend, Chris, you find out that Chris feels neglected at home, so you try to give Chris some extra attention. Before you realize it, the two of you are sharing deep things, and this intimacy leads to increasing time together, and finally adultery.

It happens not only with other missionaries, but with nationals as well. It happens to both men and women. It happens with young and old. If you think you are invulnerable to sexual sin, you are actually the most vulnerable. 1 Corinthians 10:12 describes our vulnerability, but verse 13 promises God’s faithfulness in providing a way of escape. Attraction to other people is very likely to happen, and if you do not know what to do, you may well find yourself in a position like King David, trying to cover up your sexual sin and causing serious problems for your entire family, field, and mission agency.

Homosexual activity?

Could two missionaries begin a homosexual relationship? Yes, they can, and it can happen with either men or women, married or single, young or old. As a result of isolation and loneliness, people living together with same-sex partners may form emotionally dependent relationships. These rather exclusive relationships may become possessive and lead to physical activity with sexual elements. An embrace may become more than just comforting.

This may progress into homosexual activity, so that the people involved have progressed into a sinful relationship. But even if it is stopped before reaching this level, confusion, guilt feelings, and the relationship itself need to be carefully examined.

Incest?

Certainly incest cannot occur, can it? Again, the answer is, “Yes.” Incest is still legally defined as sexual intercourse between close relatives, as described in Leviticus 18-20. Because incest is often a “family secret,” no one knows how often it occurs, but it apparently occurs most often between an adult male and a younger female relative.

The missionary community often refers to itself as a family, and socially it functions like a family. Children often have many “aunts” and “uncles” on the field to which they feel much closer than any biological relatives back “home.” Incest can also involve sexual exploitation of an intimate involving secrecy and misuse of authority—and that also happens in the “missionary family” (the field or the entire agency). Again this is most likely between an older adult male in a position of authority becoming sexually intimate with a younger female, most often the child of a co-worker or a young single female missionary.

The underlying processes seem to be the same in both. The perpetrator is a person in a position of leadership and power in the “family.” The close family is seen as a place of safety and security in a hostile world, but the perpetrator betrays this trust. The victims

often blame themselves, thinking that their spiritual leader would not have done such a thing without being provoked. Secrecy follows. The victims may keep it secret, thinking no one will believe them. When others find out, they react with disbelief, then shock, then silence--to protect the victim. They may also want to protect the perpetrator, or protect the image of the mission "family."

Why me?

Am I, as a missionary, more susceptible to sexual sin than someone back "home?" You may be because of some of the facts of missionary life. That is why this brochure is titled "sexual stress."

- High stress. Stress and anxiety tend to make many men want sex, but many women want cuddling and rest. When refused, either may think the other does not care. Cultural stress decreases the control of sexual urges, especially in those who had problems at "home."
- Lack of privacy. You may live in a "goldfish bowl" where nearly everything you do is watched and talked about. There may be no locks on the door, and sound may carry far outside the bedroom, even outside the house.
- Cultural taboos. You may live in a culture where the expectations for husband-wife behavior are quite different from your home country. You may not be able to display any affection in public, even to hold hands.
- More separation. The very nature of your work may mean the spouse has to be gone several nights a week. He or she may be tempted while away, and the partner tempted at home as well.
- Pornography available. Pornography may be more openly promoted on television, at newsstands, etc. than back home. The Internet is a mixed blessing because along with mail and information, you have access to totally uncensored pornography in your own home.
- Need for affection and touch. We all need touch, and you may be basically alone where you are with no one to just put an arm

around you in difficult times. You have left your support group behind, and may not have developed a new one.

You need to remember that you are far from home, behind "enemy lines," and the enemy will use whatever advantage he has.

How can I prevent it?

Although sexual sin occurs among missionaries, it is not unavoidable. Here are some things you can do to make it less likely.

- Acknowledge your vulnerability. Until you do this, you will not be motivated to do anything to prevent it.
- Avoid triggering situations. Know what leads you to sexual temptations. If visual stimuli do, be careful what you see on TV, the computer monitor, etc. (King David needed to stay off roofs). If it is touch, be careful about physical contact. Once you begin the sexual slide, temptation becomes stronger the further you go.
- Pray. You pray. Ask others to pray. Pray with your spouse and ask your spouse to pray for you. You have a support group back "home," so ask them to pray.
- Communicate with your spouse and regularly fulfill each other's sexual needs. Talk regularly and frequently about how you feel about your relationship with each other. As you talk, develop ways to create privacy, such as locking the front door from the outside, and coming in the back door. If you can't hold hands in public, develop other ways of saying you love each other in public, such as a wink, a raised eyebrow, etc.
- Have an accountability relationship. You also need a support group physically present who will look you in the eye and ask you regularly (weekly, if possible) about the purity of your sexual life. Remember that your capacity for self-deceit is great.
- Make a commitment to God. Read Leviticus 18-20 and 1 Corinthians 5-7. Note that they encourage you to be holy, and the way to be holy is to enjoy sex with your spouse and avoid it with anyone else. Make that commitment.
- Practice the presence of the omnipotent God. You may think that no one knows about what you are downloading from the Internet,

but remember that God is there. Not only is he there, but he wants us to be holy and promises to strengthen us (Ephesians 3:16).

45

...about Internet Immorality

(with Marty Seitz)

Although he did not have Internet access, **King David's** actions in 2 Samuel 11 illustrate processes similar to what Christian workers may experience today. David should have been out on the front lines with his army, but he remained at home alone. One night when he could not sleep, he got up and wandered around his house. He looked out and saw a very beautiful woman bathing. Rather than looking away, David sent someone to find out more about her. Even though he found out she was married, he sent someone else to invite her over. After their night of sex, she went back home. All seemed well until the woman sent word to David saying she was pregnant (and she had not had sex with her husband in weeks).

Rather than confessing his wrong, David tried a cover-up. When David had her husband come back to Jerusalem for a few days, the husband did not go home to spend the night with his pregnant wife. David got the husband drunk, but he still did not go home to his wife. So David had the husband sent into the thick of battle to be killed, adding murder to his sin of adultery. In following chapters he was confronted by a prophet who told him what he did in secret would be avenged in daylight. The child conceived in adultery died, and incest, rape, violence, family disintegration, and murder within the family followed.

Christian workers today fall into sexual temptation, and those temptations are even more prevalent because of the Internet. Even missionaries in developing nations often can access pornography from all parts of the world. Unable to sleep, they may surf the net, notice something “interesting,” click on other icons to find out more, and download images and text. If they contact others in chat rooms, the conversations may be discovered by spouses who feel betrayed or by children who become disillusioned. Families can disintegrate when either the husband or the wife becomes romantically or sexually involved with others in cyberspace.

How do I know if my spouse or I have a problem with Internet immorality?

Although none of the following alone indicate Internet immorality, several of them together may do so. **Spouses** who have an Internet problem may reveal it by showing some of the following:

- Lack of interest in sex with spouse
- Lack of interest in the family
- Increasing demand for privacy
- Change in sleep patterns, often up in the middle of the night
- Decreasing attention to their other responsibilities
- A pattern of lying about where they are or what they are doing
- A change in personality

Likewise, although none of the following alone indicate Internet immorality, several of them together may do so. **You** may have an Internet problem if you have some of the following.

- You believe the behavior is out of control.
- You want to stop what you are doing.
- You are spending large amounts of time on the Internet.
- It takes increasingly graphic images and/or words to satisfy you.
- You neglect more important matters to spend time on the Internet.
- Great mood changes accompany your behavior.

- Time on the Internet interferes with your relationship with your spouse.
- You feel guilty or depressed afterward.
- You think you would be better off if you did not keep “giving in” to Internet pornography.
- Effectiveness or concentration in your work decreases.
- You use pornographic images or memories during sex with your spouse.

For further resources on the Internet itself, check the following web sites for more such questions.

- www.pureintimacy.org Focus on the Family maintains a web site for those struggling with online pornography themselves or who have loved ones struggling.
- www.sa.org Sexaholics Anonymous maintains a more general web site for those struggling with sexual temptation.

What can I do if I have a problem with Internet immorality?

Since we are dealing with a problem that involves your computer, you can do several things to clean up your computer use.

- Most Internet service providers have some kind of **filtering software** that will block access to pornographic sites, so use that.
- One of the **best filters** available that neither underblocks pornographic material nor overblocks appropriate health information is the FamilyCLICK Internet filter at www.familyclick.com. It is well worth the few dollars a month it costs.
- If you already have a filter but use a password to bypass the blocked sites, have **someone else put in a new password** so you cannot access some sites unless that friend is there.
- Since everyone surfing the Internet or searching for something specific on it is likely to at some time access an inappropriate site, **decide in advance** that you will click on the “back” icon as soon as you realize what it is, without looking at it in detail.

- Keep your computer in a **“public” place** in the house so that others are around whenever you are using the computer.
- Have someone hold you accountable by coming in at random times to **look at the history** of sites you have visited on the Internet.
 - On **Internet Explorer** a click on “History” will instantly bring up a record of all sites you have visited during the time period specified in your computer. These can be sorted by date, site, or site most visited.
 - On **Netscape Navigator** a click on “Communicator” followed by a click on “Tools” followed by a click on “History” will instantly bring up a record of all sites you have visited during the time period specified in your computer.
 - If you use **another browser**, it will also have a way to look at the history. Of course, if you are not really serious about overcoming your viewing Internet pornography, you can make changes in your Internet options or delete sites—that just means you really are not wanting to be held accountable, not really serious about overcoming your problem.
- Have someone hold you accountable by stopping by at random times to **look at the “cookies”** that have been placed in your computer to see that there are none from pornographic sites.
- If you carry your laptop to conferences, conventions, deputation, etc, leave a list of where you will be staying every night and **have a friend call you** every evening at random times to ask you how you are doing.
- **Remove the modem** from your computer so that you cannot access the Internet at all.
- **Get rid of the computer** itself.
- **Avoid** discussing your Internet problem with an **opposite-gender friend** because doing so often increases the intimacy of that friendship, leading to temptation.
- Just as **12-step programs** for a variety of problems have been adapted from that of Alcoholics Anonymous, so have 12-step programs been adapted for people with sexual problems. These

12-step programs are described on the web sites listed. Some Christians have reservations about these programs because they may refer to “a Power greater than ourselves” and “God as we understand Him” rather than just referring to God or Christ. However, since Christian workers know God, they are able to interpose God or Christ for “a Higher power” and find these programs valuable. Following are some of the twelve steps adapted from Sexaholics Anonymous. See www.sa.org for a complete presentation of the steps.

- **Admit to yourself and to God** that you are powerless to control this behavior on your own.
- **Admit to at least one other person** of the same gender that you are powerless to control your Internet activity on your own.
- Have an **accountability group** or partner that you meet with regularly (weekly, if possible) to report how you are doing and hold you accountable.
- Have **accountability partners online** who receive a history of the web sites you visit each month. For a few dollars a month “Covenant Eyes” will e-mail or snail-mail two persons of your choice a history of all the Internet sites you visit. You will be able to view your own history, but you will not be able to change it. You may pick your own accountability partners, or they will find one for you. See www.covenanteyes.com for more information.
- Make a ruthlessly honest **moral inventory** of your life; it is likely to include more than just Internet immorality.
- **Ask God to forgive** what you have done and help you stop doing it again.
- Record in a **journal** every time you think of accessing pornography on the Internet, and your response to it. Look for patterns leading to accessing pornography and resisting the temptation to do so.
- Write a **“good-bye” letter** to your addiction, that “problematic companion” who was always there but whom you never want to see again.
- **Conventional wisdom** says, “Don’t tell your spouse. What spouses don’t know will not hurt them.” The truth is that spouses

often know or suspect, and sometimes they discover what you have downloaded or your correspondence with people in a chat room.

- **Better wisdom** is to admit to your spouse that you have a problem and ask him or her how much he or she wants to know. Spare your spouse all the gory details; the frequency of Internet access may be enough.
- Be very careful what “**pictures**” you hang on the “walls of your mind” and what “**films**” you play in the “theater of your mind.”
- Whenever illicit sexual pictures or films appear in your mind, **snap your wrist** painfully with a loose fitting rubber band you wear, and instantly begin thinking of an appropriate sexual encounter, one that you have prescribed for yourself for just this situation, such as sex with your spouse.
- Engage in the following every day, and record them in your journal.
 - Begin each day with **prayer** for resistance to Internet temptation.
 - Call and **report** to a recovering buddy.
 - **Read** some recovery literature or devotionals.
 - End each day with **prayers** of thanksgiving for resistance (and of confession, if necessary).
- Check the Internet itself for **resources** on the following web sites.
 - www.sa.org
 - www.christians-in-recovery.com
 - www.sexaddict.com
 - www.pureintimacy.org
- **Read** appropriate books recommended on the web sites above.

46

...about Sexual Abuse

We all wish it did not occur, and we avoid talking about it as if it never happens. However the fact is that, like other children, missionary kids (MKs) are sometimes sexually abused. In some cases MKs may be in even more danger of sexual abuse (such as being touched or touching inappropriately, being shown pornography, having intercourse, etc.). If parents are frequently absent, leaving their children with other missionaries, and telling their children to respect and obey the other adults as they would their own parents, those children are put under the authority of a greater spectrum of adults, increasing their opportunity to run into an abuser. If the parents have not had an open attitude about the discussion of sexuality, their MKs may believe a perpetrator whom they know well when that abuser tells them some activity is all right. Let's consider where sexual abuse can occur, what are some signs of sexual abuse, and what we can do to prevent it. (Note that we are talking about sexual abuse involving an older person, not curiosity about sexual differences between children of about the same age.)

Can it happen at home (incest)?

Of course, it can. It most often happens in families that appear to be very close. However, they are too “close”; the family members are too enmeshed. When the incest is discovered, family members typically go through denial, shock, horror, anger, grief, and finally go

on to some action (or decide not to act). The following are characteristic of incestuous relationships.

- **Power Differences.** Children are in a position of less power than perpetrators (parent or older sibling). Holding lower positions and respecting older persons, children find it very difficult to resist sexual advances.
- **Betrayal of Trust.** Families are expected to be places of safety and security, places where children are nurtured and develop the potential God has provided. Sexual abuse within the family violates this basic function of the family.
- **Blame.** Although unfair, other family members may blame the abused children, accusing them of dressing or behaving provocatively. Children may blame themselves for letting the sexual activity occur, for participating in the affection and attention, or for actually enjoying the physical sensations and closeness (if they did).
- **Secrecy.** Children may remain silent because of shame, fear, ignorance or because they do not know how to explain what is happening.

Can it happen with other missionaries?

Of course, it can. When it does, it often has many of the same characteristics as incest (sexual abuse within a family). In fact, many mission agencies refer to themselves as “missionary families” in which each child has many “aunts” and “uncles” who are not blood relatives, but to whom the children feel close. Like biological families, such missionary families living together in another culture may become too enmeshed so that they become dysfunctional, and sexual abuse may happen to children as well as single female missionaries. These relationships have the same characteristics as incest.

- **Power Differences.** Children on a given field are encouraged to respect and obey other missionaries as they do their parents. Single women may also be under the authority of the perpetrator and be somewhat flattered to receive attention. This is especially

true of the perpetrator is the spiritual and moral leader of the group who is in the spotlight of many worship services.

- **Betrayal of Trust.** Children and single women expect the missionary community (family) to give them protection and care in the host culture. Sexual abuse within that community betrays such trust.
- **Blame.** The missionary community (family) may blame the child or the single woman for seducing their colleague or leader. Likewise, the victims may also begin to blame themselves.
- **Secrecy.** Sexual abuse in the missionary family may be even more secret because if it becomes known, it will bring shame on the missionary enterprise, God’s work.

Can it happen at boarding school?

Of course, it can. Cases of such abuse have received wide publicity during the ‘90s with schools and churches apologizing to those abused. Again the family model is used with the students living in houses with others who are like brothers or sisters their age, and the people in charge are their dorm “parents.”

- **Power Differences.** Students are to respect and obey their surrogate parents and love their surrogate siblings.
- **Betrayal of Trust.** The school family is to be a place of protection and care.
- **Blame.** Again victims may blame themselves or be blamed by others.
- **Secrecy.** Revealing the abuse will bring disgrace on the school. If it is a Christian school, revealing the abuse will also bring disgrace on the cause of Christ.

Can it happen in the host culture?

Again the answer is a resounding “Yes!” In this case it is abuse coming from outside the family, so it is not a betrayal of trust and seldom is the victim blamed, but the secrecy is still there in the sense that it is often not talked about.

One adult MK described walking through a bustling marketplace at the age of 16 with a friend. Suddenly a man on a bicycle veered toward them so that the man could reach out and grab the friend's breast. The two of them walked on without breaking stride. Their conversation continued uninterrupted. Although it is painfully seared on her memory, never in 25 years did the two of them ever mention it.

Some cultures view women as intrinsically inferior to men in nearly every way rather than as image-bearers of God who are to be respected. Sometimes female MKs are told to ignore the stares, rude gestures, touches, and pinches. They may come to believe that their feelings of fear, indignation, and humiliation are wrong rather than seeing the abuse as what is wrong. They are expected to treat such things as insignificant, something to get used to, a part of adapting to the culture.

Boys as well as girls may be sexually molested. In fact, some cultures routinely masturbate boys to calm them, and sodomy can occur in any culture.

What are some signs of sexual abuse?

Some children who are being sexually abused function quite normally and do not have any obvious symptoms. Others have only general symptoms that could indicate a variety of other problems related to growing up. The most certain way to know about abuse is when individuals report it.

Some physical conditions may indicate sexual abuse. If a child has bruises or bleeding in the genital or anal areas, foreign bodies in the vagina or rectum, pain or itching in the genital area, stained or bloody underclothing, painful discharge of urine, or difficulty walking or sitting, they should be examined by a physician. It is important not to make accusations of sexual abuse because any or all of these conditions may have other causes, and a missionary's reputation and effectiveness can be destroyed by a false accusation.

Some behaviors may indicate sexual abuse. Children who force sexual acts on others, talk a lot about sexual activity, engage in

sexual games unusual for children their age, have an unusual knowledge of sexual things, engage in sexually aggressive behaviors, have an unusual interest in sexual things, or have an unusual fear of men may have been sexually abused. Again, any of these may have other causes, and accusations must not be made on the basis of them alone.

What can we do?

Although sexual predators will always be with us, there are several things we can do to minimize the damage they do.

- Talk about it (early, regularly, age-appropriately). Teach children the difference between good touch, bad touch, and confusing touch as well as the difference between good secrets and bad secrets. Tell children where they can go if trouble occurs and make it clear that no matter what happens, no sexual activity with an older person should be kept secret. Let them know that sometimes people, even people they trust, may try to touch them inappropriately or get them to do something that seems to be wrong as part of a game or secret. If this occurs they should say no and not do the wrong thing.
- Believe them. If a child reports abuse, tell them that you believe them (even though "Uncle John" seems to be the most child-loving, spiritual missionary you know). Do not jump to conclusions but stay calm and listen. Do not ask leading questions (Did he touch you there?), but write down word-for-word exactly what the child said describing the abuse as soon as possible after talking with the child. Affirm the child's feelings (It's OK to be angry, frightened, etc.) and reassure him or her that you will continue to be there whenever needed.
- Report it. Even though the alleged perpetrator may be an important spiritual leader in your agency, take some action. If your agency has procedures for taking action against people who do wrong, follow those procedures. If not, take whatever action you can in your situation. This is as much to prevent abuse of

others as it is to stop abuse of the child involved. Abusers often repeat the offense and must be stopped.

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...about Maintaining Sexual Purity

While watching TV, you have noticed that you pick up on something you have seen or heard, and your thoughts become more sexual. You have also noticed how attractive that other person at the office is, and you have begun imagining... You are taken by surprise because missionaries like you are so deeply committed to Christ. You are on the frontlines of spiritual battles, taking Christ to people who have never heard. Such missionaries certainly would not get into sexual sin, would they?

Of course, they would. For centuries military personnel in any conflict have been notorious for their sexual immorality. Engaged in physical/ideological battles in strange cultures far from family, friends, community, and church, they engage in sexual exploits. Why would you expect any less temptation for you, as you engage in the spiritual battles against the forces of evil? You are lonely. With social support absent, emotional needs unmet, and living in a strange culture with greater sexual freedom than at home, why would Satan not take advantage of you as well?

Most missionaries can quote 1 Corinthians 10:13, “No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.” “Seized” is the proper word because sexual temptation can become so strong that a person is willing to give up everything—relationships with God, spouse, and family; reputation,

ministry, everything. Before quoting the verse above and thinking you are surely safe, read the verse before it, “These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come. So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall!” (1 Corinthians 10: 11-12)

Same-Old. Same-Old. New-New!

The Bible specifies three intertwined sources of temptation, commonly called “the world, the flesh, and the Devil.” Two of these are relatively unchanged since Paul wrote the letter to the Ephesians, but one has changed dramatically during the last century,

- The Devil, “...the ruler of the kingdom of the air” (Ephesians 2:2). As he has done for thousands of years, at some times the devil goes around as a roaring lion looking for someone to devour, but more often relative to sexual temptation he slips in almost unnoticed, sowing small seeds that will grow into sinful behavior.
- The Flesh, “...gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts” (Ephesians 2:3). Missionaries are tempted simply because they are human. As James puts it, “Each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed” (1:14). Human nature has not changed over the years, so people today are tempted just as they were when James wrote that 200 years ago.
- The World “...when you followed the ways of this world” (Ephesians 2:2). The writer to the Romans (12: 2) warned to “not conform any longer to the pattern of this world.” The “ways of the world” and the “pattern of the world” have not changed relative to sexual temptation since Paul’s time. However these sexual temptations literally come through the air and the walls as the “prince of the power of the air” sends them into missionaries’ homes through radios, TV satellite receivers, email, and Internet connections.

The Devil and the Flesh are relatively unchanged, but technology in our world is new. Even after the invention of printing,

missionaries could be quite effective in keeping obscene, pornographic, and suggestive material out of their homes. However, most missionaries today are required to have at least email, if not Internet connections. Since about 40% of all email is spam and about 30% of all spam is pornographic, about one in every eight emails is pornographic, and some of it will get through even the best filters. Filters block many pornographic sites on the Internet, but some still gets through—and pop-ups may suddenly appear on your screen at any time.

What can missionaries do in this new world to maintain sexual purity? As is so often the case, the answer to resisting temptation is in what we call the Great Commandment, originating when the Law was given to Moses and cited by Jesus himself.

Love God

The most important thing missionaries can do to maintain sexual purity is to love God with their whole beings, their heart, soul, strength, and mind (Luke 10, Deuteronomy 6). Your relationship to God must take top priority

- Have a daily, consistent devotional time to maintain your relationship with God. Include at least reading Scripture, meditating, and praying. (Bible study for sermon preparation, writing, teaching preparation, and so forth does not count!)
- Make a specific commitment to God to live a holy life free of sexual sin. Write this commitment down and place it where you will see it daily (desk, mirror, etc.)
- Study, meditate on, memorize, and apply Scripture on this topic. Note that in the major passages where the Bible talks about being holy it is in the context of sexual sin (Leviticus 18-20, I Corinthians 5-7). Review these periodically on a regular basis.

Love Others

The second most important thing missionaries can do to maintain sexual purity is to love others (Luke 10, Leviticus 19). Your

love relationships with others must have a high priority as well.

Relative to sexual purity this would include the following.

- Learn the cues in your host country that signal sexual purity and sexual availability. These include such things as dress, eye contact, posture, gestures, and so forth.
- Be aware that even within cultures people vary widely on the meaning of touch. Something you consider indicating only friendship may be interpreted as sexual by another person. Touch is not improper, but be aware that what you mean as “good touch” may be interpreted by another as “bad touch” or erotic touch.
- Be especially alert when in “high risk” situations, such as being alone with another person, spending prolonged time working with another person, and so forth.
- Meet weekly an accountability partner (or group) to answer specific questions about your sexual purity.
- If married, make your relationship with your spouse of highest priority (of all people). Set aside regular times to be together, just as you set aside time for God. Spouses who do not communicate on a regular basis about how they really feel grow further and further apart, regardless of how close they think they are.
- If married, make the same commitment to your spouse (relative to sexual purity) that you make to God.
- If married, be intentional about meeting the emotional, physical, and spiritual needs of your spouse.

Love Yourself

The third most important thing that missionaries can do to maintain sexual purity is to love themselves, to care for themselves as they care for others.

- Accept your own vulnerability. 1 Corinthians 10:12 reminds us that if we think we are standing firm, we must be careful or we will fall.
- List (actually write them down) sexual things you will not do, such as those found in Leviticus 18-20.

- List sexual things that may be permissible but not beneficial, things that may master you as in 1 Corinthians 6. These are things not specifically mentioned in Scripture, such as certain movies, music, TV shows, books, Internet sites, and so forth. These are not necessarily sinful, but they may lead to sinful behavior.
- Concentrate on “renewing your mind” as described in Colossians 3 and in Ephesians 4. Take every thought captive to make it obedient to God as described in 2 Corinthians 10. Think on the kinds of things mentioned in Philipians 4.
- Avoid danger zones for you. If you know that you are tempted visually, do not watch videos or TV shows that you know will contain graphic sexual images. If you know that you are tempted verbally, do not visit Internet chat rooms or read explicit romance novels.
- Develop an early warning system to increase your awareness of problems coming. Knowing that you will be talking with an accountability partner is likely to make you more aware of danger zones. If you are married and feel the slightest attraction for someone other than your spouse, take action immediately.
- Develop a plan for combating temptations which will occur in spite of your attempts to avoid them. If your greatest temptation is visual images, train your eyes to “bounce” away from such images as soon as they appear. If your temptation is through touch, train yourself to withdraw as soon as any touch becomes erotic.

Joseph was a handsome, single, young man with hormones raging (just past puberty) when he was taken to a different culture. When his boss’ wife asked him to have sex with her, he politely refused and gave her good reasons for his refusal. He refused her repeated requests. One time when he went to work and they were alone in the house, she grabbed his coat and asked for sex, but he left his coat and ran out of the house. You can maintain your sexual purity too, but you may have to run from a person, or your computer!

48

...about Pornography

About a decade into the 21st century Josh McDowell sensed that something was distorting our views of morality and the Christian faith. He finally became convinced that a major part of the problem was easy access to pornography through the Internet. As a result the Josh McDowell Ministry commissioned the Barna Group to conduct major research to find out how much pornography has permeated the family, the church, and the culture.

The research involved nearly 3000 people in four surveys during 2015. The surveys included parallel questions relative to age and sample. One survey included 813 people between 13 and 24 years of age in the general USA population. A second survey included 1188 people 25 years of age and older in the USA. The third survey included 432 senior pastors. The final survey included 388 youth pastors. These surveys were given to representative national samples.

General Findings

The report is 160 pages long and includes many findings. Much of the report contrasts practicing Christians with those who make no profession of faith. Practicing Christians are self-identified Christians who agree strongly that their faith is very important in their lives and have attended a church worship service within the past month.

Here are some disturbing findings about the general population.

- 27% of those 25-30 years of age began viewing pornography before puberty.

- 41% of male practicing Christians 13-24 years old seek out porn daily, weekly, or monthly. In addition 23% of those 25 or over do so as well.
- Those 13-24 ranked not recycling, overeating, and overconsumption of electricity or water as each more immoral than “viewing porn.”
- More than half of all Americans seek out porn at least occasionally.
- Young women who seek porn are more likely than men to be involved in “sexting.” Among women 18-24 69% had received a nude image and 51% had sent one. Among men 57% had received a nude image and 33% had sent one.

Pastors

However, the “Special Report: Pastors & Porn” section is much more relevant to missionaries. One in five youth pastors and one in seven senior pastors use porn. That means that more than 50,000 church leaders in the USA use porn. Missionaries and pastors are both in Christian leadership roles. Pastors lead in their own home cultures, and missionaries lead in their host cultures. We do not know if the use of porn is similar between pastors and missionaries, but since online videos and online pictures are the primary sources of porn for people of all ages, missionaries have at least equal access.

Pastors struggle with porn. Pastors who currently use porn (1 in 7 senior pastors and 1 in 5 youth pastors) checked, “I started viewing porn before puberty.”

Among senior pastors 57% are either struggling or have struggled with porn in past (43% in past, 14% currently). Among youth pastors, 64% are either struggling or have struggled in the past (43% in past, 21% currently).

Pastors were asked about the effects of porn in several areas of life. Here are some results for pastors who currently use porn.

I feel guilty when I use porn.

Senior pastors 86% Youth pastors 95%

I feel shame about using porn.

Senior pastors 87% Youth pastors 94%

I am currently trying to stop using porn.

Senior pastors 71% Youth pastors 83%

I tried to stop using it, but couldn't.

Senior pastors 54% Youth pastors 68%

I live in constant fear of being discovered.

Senior pastors 55% Youth pastors 56%

It negatively impacts my ministry.

Senior pastors 64% Youth pastors 75%

It negatively affected my sex life.

Senior pastors 38% Youth pastors 45%

In addition, the study also found that porn also had negative effects on other things, such as relationships and productivity.

Missionaries

No study of this type has been done on missionaries serving cross-culturally; so no one can draw firm conclusions. However, it is extremely unlikely that people ministering in other cultures would be less tempted than those serving in their passport cultures. Missionaries are likely to also experience the same effects: guilt, shame, fear, unable to stop, hindrance to ministry, etc.

Warning signs became obvious about the turn of the century. In a chapter in *Doing Member Care Well* (2002), Ken Williams said, "Once we have begun the slide, sexual temptation will probably be the strongest force we will ever experience. Its power can grow to the point that we become willing to give up everything to gratify it: relationship with Christ, spouse and children, home, ministry, reputation, friends, *everything*. And no believer is so spiritual that he or she is immune to its power."

The cover article of the January 2003 issue of *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* (EMQ) was, "The dark side of the Internet." It was written by two people who had given a presentation at the International Conference on Computing in Missions. The "Techies" of mission agencies were finding evidence of porn on computers in their organizations and they did not know what to do about it: confront the person, report to a superior, or do nothing. Unfortunately, most mission agencies did not follow up on the information. They neither thanked the authors for bringing the subject into the open nor took steps to help their missionaries.

What does the Bible say?

Sexual fantasy is certainly nothing new. While elaborating on the Old Testament commandment against adultery in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, "But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matt. 5:28).

Some people interpret this verse to mean that if they have a passing

thought about sex with another person they have committed the sin of adultery. However, both Jesus and Paul used the same word describing themselves. At the Last Supper as Jesus spoke to his disciples he said, "I have strongly desired (lusted?) to eat this Passover with you..." (Luke 22:15). When writing to the Romans Paul said that he would not have known what coveting (lusting?) was "if the law had not said, "Do not covet (lust?)." (Romans 7:7). Thus lusting is more than a passing glance or thought; it is also translated "strongly desired" or "set your desire on."

People in the porn study were asked to give the reason they search for porn. No matter how the researchers cut the data, the most frequent answer was "for personal arousal." Here are the results for several cuts.

- By gender: men and women
- By age: 13-17, 18-24, 25-30, 31-50, 51-59
- By marital status: married, all single, never married, single, have been married
- By ethnicity: Black, Hispanic, Asian, White
- By frequency of porn use: daily, weekly, monthly, less often

The most frequent answer for all of these was the same, "for personal arousal."

Even if it was not sinful in God's sight, viewing porn can be devastating to relationships and may lead to divorce, breaking engagements, and stopping dating. At best it hurts a friend who feels committed.

What can one do?

In 2002 Ken Williams also said, "Involvement in pornography is particularly difficult to overcome. When one has become addicted, that is, compulsively drawn to pornographic images time after time and unable to stop, he/she will need help from a colleague, a support group, or a counselor to overcome the pull. No one makes it alone to recover from addiction. And no believer is so spiritual that he or she is immune to its power."

Preventing an addiction is much more effective than overcoming it after it occurs. The Barna study asked pastors what they recommended to help people overcome it, and all of these are effective in preventing it. The following five procedures are recommended for prevention.

When asked what resources they recommend to help people overcome porn use, senior pastors and youth pastors do not agree which are of most help. Here are the percentages of both recommending the top five procedures.

Personal counseling

Senior pastors 71% Youth pastors 76%

Internet monitoring/filtering

Senior pastors 59% Youth pastors 79%

Accountability groups

Senior pastors 52% Youth pastors 72%

Mentors

Senior pastors 45% Youth pastors 82%

Topic-specific Bible study

Senior pastors 24% Youth pastors 45%

Both senior pastors and youth pastors recommended Internet monitoring/filtering and accountability groups. Covenant Eyes (www.covenanteyes.com) includes both the filtering and accountability, and the study included a special report on how much the combination improves the capacity not to seek out porn.

Covenant Eyes is software that not only filters sites individuals can visit and videos people can watch, but also it sends a chosen accountability partner an email list of similar things a person accesses. Unlike many free filters, one cannot turn it off or uninstall the software without the accountability partner getting notice.

The research found that among adults 25 and over, no matter how often they sought out porn, those with Covenant eyes were less likely to access porn. In fact, 37% never sought it out at all. The old saying, “an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure” really is true. The more individuals seek porn, the more likely they are to find it. Soon they find themselves wanting more but not liking it more. They then move from “regular” to more deviant and cruel images and videos.

49**...about Same-Sex Marriage**

The USA Congress passed Defense of Marriage Act in 1996, and Section 3 defined marriage for the purposes of federal law as “a union of one man and one woman.” Of course, this had been the usual definition for thousands of years, since Genesis 2:24 said, “a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife.”

In 2013 the USA Supreme Court ruled that Section 3 violated the Fifth Amendment. Then in 2015, it ruled that refusing marriage or refusing to recognize marriage to same-sex couples violated the Fourteenth amendment.

Some citizens were elated that their battle to make such marriages legal and available was successful. Others were aghast that such a thing could happen in their own culture. Missionaries may now find themselves in difficult situations. Some nationals believe that America is a Christian nation and wonder how it could allow same-sex marriages. They may also wonder if such marriages should be allowed in churches in their own countries that also allow such marriages. Other nationals in countries in which homosexual behavior is a crime may wonder if their laws should be changed. Before considering these questions one needs to know what the Bible says.

What does the Bible say?

The Bible is not silent on the subject of homosexual behavior. The first mention of it occurs in the early chapters of Genesis during the time of Abraham. Abraham’s call to a different culture is in Chapter 12, and Sodom is mentioned in Chapter 13 where the Bible states “The men of Sodom were

wicked and sinning greatly against the Lord.” Sodom’s wickedness is reiterated, and Abraham pleads for Sodom in Chapter 18. The nature of their sin becomes clear in Chapter 19 where men from all over the city ask Lot, “Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out so that we can have sex with them” (verse 5). This event is the reason that the word “sodomy” is often used to describe homosexual behavior between men.

Such behavior appears again in the Old Testament in Leviticus 18. After several verses defining incest, verse 22 states, “Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable.” Leviticus 20:13 goes on to say that in such cases, both men must be put to death.

In the New Testament the first chapter of Romans also deals with the topic. “God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another...God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones...Men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men” (verses 24-27).

Whatever became of sin?

Karl Menninger, one of the founders of the Menninger Clinic, noted that by the 1960s the word “sin” rarely occurred in American culture. Actions were described as being disgraceful, evil, corrupt, prejudicial, harmful, and so forth, but they were seldom called sinful.

In 1973, Menninger published his book, *Whatever Became of Sin*. He noted that particular sins may become crimes, mental illnesses, or just accepted in society as normal behavior. Apparently homosexual behavior has been regarded as each of these in much of Western culture.

When an action is labeled as a sin, the problem is dealt with by the church and people such as priests, pastors, and youth ministers. These individuals offer opportunities for confession, repentance, and forgiveness leading to salvation. If sinners take advantage of these opportunities they have a new life in Christ. Sinners who reject these opportunities remain in their lost state.

Became crime?

Many sins have become criminal as well as sinful. For example, the sins of stealing and murder became crimes, as well as sins, when cultures passed laws against them. When treated as crimes, the state deals with them through the justice system in which police officers, prison guards, attorneys, judges, and parole officers deal with them instead of the church and the clergy. The officials of the justice system arrest, incarcerate, counsel, parole, and treat.

Many countries passed laws to make homosexual behavior a crime as well as a sin. Nearly all states in the USA passed sodomy laws. Therefore homosexual behavior was handled by the justice system.

Became mental illness?

Some sins became mental disorders, as was the case with homosexual behavior. When that happened, the medical system in which psychiatrists, psychologists, counselors, and clinical social workers became the ones to deal with such behavior. They treated these mental disorders with mental hospitals, drugs, and therapies of all types.

The *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM) of the American Psychiatric Association is the standard in the USA. When it was first published in 1952, “Homosexuality” was listed as one of the 106 mental disorders. Thus, when Menninger wrote his book, homosexuality was not only a sin and a crime but also a mental disorder.

Became alternate lifestyle?

During the last half of the 20th century some cultures revised definitions of homosexuality as a crime and/or a mental illness. In the USA most states decriminalized homosexuality during this time, and the last 14 states did so when the Supreme Court declared sodomy laws unconstitutional in 2004.

Many of the countries in the Western world have also decriminalized homosexual behavior; however, in 2013 it was still a crime in 77 countries—mostly in Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia.

Homosexuality remained a mental disorder in the DSM for more than three decades before a committee in the American Psychiatric Association removed it in 1973. The American Psychological Association

followed in 1975, and the World Health Organization in 1990. Homosexuality was changed into just a sexual orientation, not a mental disorder.

Issues to Consider

For thousands of years, people usually remained in their own cultures most of the time, and cultures changed very slowly. However with changes in technology interaction and integration between people and governments of many nations have led to globalization and rapid changes in cultures.

First. Many cultures are changing rapidly. Sins may become crimes or mental disorders, then not crimes or mental disorders, and then crimes or mental illnesses again. For example, India de-criminalized homosexual behavior in 2009 and re-criminalized it in 2013. Thus about 16% of the world's total population saw the law changed twice in only six years.

Second. Western culture is becoming less Christian.

Christianity and the Bible influenced many Western nations as they developed.. This influence continued from the founding of the USA to shortly after the middle of the 20th century, as shown by the following acts of Congress in the 1950s. Congress passed the following legislation between 1954 and 1957.

- Added the words “under God” to the pledge of allegiance.
- Approved the addition of the Congressional Prayer Room which includes the words “This nation under God” across the top of the stained glass window
- Approved legislation to require all paper money to include “In God We Trust” (It had been on all coins for more than a century).

Third. A US Supreme Court ruling does not change what is sinful or not. Such a ruling does not change God's definition of marriage. Such rulings change what is legal or illegal in a culture but have nothing to do with what is sinful or not, what is moral or immoral, etc. Same sex couples may legally marry, but homosexual behavior is still sinful.

Unfortunately, even different Christian groups do not agree on what is sinful. Most Roman Catholic and Evangelical Protestant groups maintain that homosexual behavior is sinful. Liberal Protestants often do not.

Fourth. God still forgives people who sin, even sexual sins. The early verses of John 8 tell about the woman caught in the act of adultery.

The teachers of the law pointed out that the Law of Moses gave them the right to stone her to death. However, Jesus insightful response resulted in everyone leaving. Then Jesus told the woman he did not condemn her either, but she should go and leave her life of sin.

What can one do?

Missionaries serving in countries where homosexual behavior is illegal are unlikely to face major questions about issues regarding same sex marriages. However, if nationals keep up with events in the USA, missionaries may face questions about how this can be true in a “Christian” nation. Of course, information about cultural changes presented earlier may help answer that.

Missionaries serving in countries where same-sex marriages are legal may need to explain the differences between something being legal and something being sinful. Ideally, behaviors that are morally wrong would be illegal, but in reality, we live in a world where that is seldom true. This is especially difficult when Christians disagree, and it is probably best to encourage nationals to read their Bibles to find out what is sinful.

In either case, missionaries must remember that all individuals, including homosexuals, still need love, and sinners still need forgiveness as well as changed lives. Missionaries can still pray for those they are serving and disciple those who repent and believe.

Part 5. Relationships with Others

Difficulties in relationships are one of the leading causes of missionary attrition. One of the characteristics of good leaders is to care for those who follow them, not just to organize them to get the task done. Although many people do not realize it, some causes of relationship problems are the differences in generations, and the chapter “about each” other presents some of those differences.

Every missionary ought to know something about managing conflict; therefore, the chapter about conflict presents ways to resolve those conflicts that arise between missionaries. When we pray the Lord’s prayer, we ask God to forgive our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. The chapter about forgiveness shows what this means and how we can go about it. Ideally, we can go beyond forgiveness to reconciliation as well, but since reconciliation depends on both people, it is not always possible.

50

...about Relationships

Making and maintaining friendships on the field has been so difficult. You begin to wonder if there is something wrong with you. Why are relationships so difficult? What do relationships have to do with the Great Commission anyway? How can we make friends? What if some friendships just don’t work? Let’s consider some of these questions.

What do relationships have to do with the Great Commission?

They are central to it. In the Great Commission Jesus told us to go and make disciples of all people groups. If people are going to become disciples, they have to recognize that you are disciples—and want to become like you. Jesus said that people will know that you are his disciples if you love each other (John 13:35). In the previous verse, he had called his command to “love one another,” a new command, but it was really a re-newed command. It was first given back in Leviticus, then quoted by Jesus when he was asked about the Greatest Commandment. He said to love God and to love your neighbor as yourself.

Certainly the Great Commission involves preaching and teaching people to love God. However, that may be easier than obeying that second great command, the command to love each other. When nationals look at friendships among missionaries, do they say, “Look how they love each other!” If not, perhaps your friendships

need some improvement so that you can better carry out the Great Commission of making disciples. If people do not recognize that you are disciples and want to become like you, your ministry may be quite fruitless.

Why are missionary friendships so difficult?

Making and maintaining friendships is difficult for most people. People are different in many ways, and may feel threatened or may let stereotypes keep them from forming close friendships. Some people are morning types, others evening types. Some work fast and have everything done early, others complete things at the last minute. People have different personality traits, such as some being extraverts and others introverts. Some people are quite mature, others immature. In addition to these general factors, other more specific ones make it even more difficult for missionaries to develop and maintain close friendships.

- **Time.** In your “home” country everyone is busy, but on the field there is even more to keep you busy. The hassles of everyday life, such as getting and preparing food, paying bills and getting things repaired all take longer. You have to maintain relationships with supporters.
- **Mobility.** At “home” people move, but changing your residence twice every five years is built into missionary life—on the field four years, home one. At home, deputation keeps you on the road. On the field, you frequently move even during your term.
- **Expectations.** Although people back “home” disappoint you, other missionaries may do so even more often because you expect more of them. They ought to know what you need and meet that need. Where is their love?

We have a good example of this in the disciples who were an evangelism team of twelve to reach Palestine. Jesus was the field director. The disciples had been called, had gone through the selection process, had left their jobs, had gone through orientation, and had gone out in teams of two. They had gone through training and

had served for nearly three years. You would certainly expect that they would have things down pretty well.

Let’s pick up the story in Mark 9. The disciples had been arguing about who was the greatest. Jesus calls them around and points out that whoever wants to be first has to be last and servant of all. In Mark 10 they meet the rich young man who would not give up his possessions. When Peter points out that the disciples had given up home and family to travel and spread the good news, Jesus agrees and reviews the teaching about the first being last and the last first. Even after two clear lessons, as they travel on toward Jerusalem, James and John (or their mother) ask to be first in the kingdom. When the other ten hear about this, they become indignant with James and John—those two should know better! However, rather than scolding them, Jesus calls the disciples around and again reviews the lesson: Whoever wants to be great must be the servant of others.

How do we form such relationships?

To live so that people will know that we are his disciples by our love for each other is not easy in today’s world, but it can be done. Of course, you cannot be intimate friends with everyone, so after you have chosen people with whom you would like to develop such a relationship, try the following to form friendships.

- **Time.** Friendships take time. Your response may be that you just do not have time, that you have to prioritize your schedule. If you believe it is important for people to recognize that you are his disciples, you may want to start scheduling your priorities. Time allotted each week to developing missionary relationships will make you more effective, less likely to quit missionary work, more likely to be happy, and less likely to become ill.
- **Affirmation.** One can live for several weeks on one good compliment. However, most of us go for months without giving or receiving any. When was the last time you gave a firm compliment to build someone up and strengthen relationships?
- **Trust.** Spending time together in an affirming atmosphere is likely soon to lead to the development of trust. As time increases

so may the trust--but you must be very careful never to betray a trust. Trust takes months or years to build, and only seconds to destroy.

- Communication. Some people have never really had someone give full attention and really listen. Sometimes we hear what people are saying with words, but not with their hearts.
- Vulnerability. When trustworthy people care and really listen, we tend to open up and become more vulnerable, more honest with each other rather than being “on guard.”

We all need a group of supporting friends. People from individualistic Western cultures often think that all they need for their ministry is “Jesus and me,” but they are suffering from “angel syndrome,” believing that they do not have the same needs as ordinary people just because they have been called into the Lord’s service.

What about cliques?

Isn’t there a danger of forming exclusive groups that ignore others on the field? Of course, there is, but you can take precautions to see that it does not happen. For example, agree that you will not spend time together at church or at field events. Make it a point to have someone else in your home for each time you have someone from your group over.

What if it doesn’t work?

That will almost certainly happen with some people. It is unlikely that every attempt at friendship will result in the kind of relationship described here. If not, try again elsewhere. Except for those in very isolated areas, most missionaries today are near missionaries from other organizations, and that is a good place to look, even a good place to begin. If your friends are all from the same agency, you may be setting yourselves up for burnout as you

increasingly discuss mission business rather than building relationships.

Do it!

As is so often the case, we know what we should do, we just don’t do it. In Luke 10 an expert in the law asks Jesus what he has to do for eternal life. Jesus asks him what was in the law. The man replies by giving the great commandment, including, “love your neighbor as yourself.”

Jesus tells him he is right, “Do this and you will live.” However, trying to justify his lack of relationships, the man asks who his neighbor is. Jesus tells the story (a cross-cultural one, at that) about the Samaritan who helped after the two religious men had ignored the man in need. When Jesus asks who was the neighbor, the expert in the law answers correctly. Jesus again tells him to go and do the same.

Like the expert in the law, our problem is often not in finding out what to do, but in actually doing what we see to be right. In Mark 12 another teacher commenting on Jesus giving the great commandment observes that to love God and “to love your neighbor as you love yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices” (v. 33). Jesus notes that this is a wise answer. That is, loving your neighbor may be more important than many of the “professional missionary” things you do.

Spending much time in the “business” of missionary work may be a symptom that one is avoiding the hard work of building and maintaining relationships--that one is trying to fill the need for close human relationships with “busy-ness.” The single most helpful earthly resource for combating stress is social support—feeling comfortable sharing with others and then actually sharing with others who are positive and supportive.

If more missionaries developed intimate friendship relationships, they would be happier, healthier, and would require less missionary care. By the missionaries’ love for each other, nationals

would recognize that they were Jesus' disciples and may want to become disciples as well.

51

...about Comparison and Envy

You may have noticed that some missionaries are always unhappy, comparing themselves with others and wishing they had what others have. The list of things they wish for seems to be endless, including such things as being able to speak the language better, better housing, higher salary, larger classes, fewer committee assignments, more spirituality, more people attending their church, less paperwork, a better vehicle, and so forth.

If you are completely honest, you have probably noticed the same thing in yourself. You have wanted what someone else has. When you get it, you feel happy for a short time; then you want more—or you want something else.

This never-ending cycle is as old as humanity itself. In Genesis 3 the serpent appealed to Eve by noting that if she ate the forbidden fruit she would be like God. She was already made in God's image, but she wanted more. She ate, and sin entered.

In Genesis 4 Cain wanted the same blessing Abel had received, so he killed his brother (as if that would get God's blessing). Read on through the heroes of the faith in Genesis.

- Abraham: his wife wanted the child that her maid had (Genesis 16).
- Isaac: one son wanted the blessing the other one got. (Genesis 27).
- Jacob: ten sons wanted the attention their younger brother had (Genesis 37).

Over and over unhappy people compared themselves with others and envied what others had. Since this phenomenon is so pervasive and is found throughout history, let us look at the relationship between happiness, comparison, and envy.

Happiness

The second paragraph of the U. S. Declaration of Independence begins with “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” One must remember that this is a political statement, not Scripture. All people are not created equal except at the foot of the cross.

Believing that all people should be equal, contemporary Americans frequently make comparisons and are unhappy to find that people are not equal. One must also note that the Declaration says only that one has the right to pursue happiness (not that everyone will find it).

Happiness depends on two factors.

- First, happiness depends on your past experience, especially your recent past experience. For example, suppose you have lived in an apartment with 900 square feet for five years and your agency gives you one with 1200 square feet. It will feel very large, and you will be much happier with it—for a while. However, you will soon adapt to the new size, and your happiness will drop back to what it was in the smaller apartment. The same is true for an increase in salary, fewer committees, a new vehicle, and so forth. There is always an increase in happiness, followed by a gradual return to the original level as you adapt.

Ecclesiastes 5:10 refers to this when it says, “Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income.” No matter how much money you make, how large living space you have, or what kind of vehicle you get, adaptation will occur, and you will want more.

- Second, your happiness also depends on what other people have. So let us now consider comparisons with others.

Comparison

You may be satisfied with what you have until you find out what others have. Using the apartment example, you may feel a little cramped in your 900 square foot apartment, but not even be thinking about how small it is until you walk into a couple of your colleagues' new apartments and find that they have more space than you—both of them have nearly 1200 square feet!

People usually compare themselves with those they consider to be equal to, or slightly above, them. When they find out that those others have more, they become dissatisfied with what had made them happy.

This is illustrated in the parable Jesus told his disciples in Matthew 20. He told about the owner of a vineyard who early in the morning agreed to pay several men a denarius for a day's work. Four more times during the day he hired more workers and sent them in. When he paid everyone a denarius at the end of the day, the men hired early were unhappy and complained. They were happy with their wages until they found out what the others were paid.

These comparisons where we feel like we have come up short often lead not only to unhappiness, but also to envy.

Envy

Rather than just feeling dissatisfied, we want what the other people have—we envy them. Envy grows out of coveting and being unable to have the desired object, such as the 1200 square foot apartment. Envy is more than just coveting what another person has. It is not being able to have the larger apartment because someone else has it. No one easily confesses to such envy because it seems to be the nastiest and meanest of the seven cardinal sins.

Furthermore, envy can never result in gratification—no enjoyment, only endless self-torment as its appetite increases. Envy is

not merely wanting another's good, but wanting to pull the other person down. This leads to resentment, backbiting, spite, accusation, hatred, and even murder, as we saw with Cain and Abel.

Envy eventually spreads to all of our attitudes and relationships. King Saul's envy of David after the Goliath episode is well known. Note in 1 Samuel 18 how this envy spread to other things about David.

- Son Jonathan's love for David (v. 3)
- Songs about Saul and David (v 8)
- David's relationship with God (v 14)
- David's success in everything (v 15, 30)
- Daughter Michal's love (v 20, 28)

Also note how his behavior spread to other relationships.

- Tried to kill David twice (18:10-11)
- Told Jonathan and attendants to kill David (19:1)
- Accused Michal of deception (19:17)
- Tried to kill Jonathan (20:33)

Envious people do not even really love themselves. They are not grateful for, or happy in, what they are or what they have. This sin is deadly, less because it destroys people, than because it will not let them live. It does not let them live as themselves grateful for the qualities and talents that God has given them, making the best and most rewarding use of those gifts. Their degradation of others is a reflection of their degradation of themselves. These people wind up alienated from themselves as well as others and "miss the party" like the elder brother of the prodigal son in Luke 15.

What can one do?

Few people readily admit their sin of envy. It is so filled with self, wanting something because someone else has it, that it seems to be completely mean and nasty. Whenever we notice differences between us and others, we are likely to begin making comparisons, and those comparisons often lead to envy. Since few of us escape feelings of envy, what can we do when the Spirit makes us aware of our envy? What can we do to avoid falling into this trap?

- Confess and repent. As with any other sin, we are to confess it, and God has promised to forgive (1 John 1). If we deny our sin, we deceive ourselves and remain in it. When we are forgiven, we are to repent, not only to feel sorrow for the wrong we have done but also to turn from the sin itself. Following are ways to help you turn from envy, to avoid it rather than be trapped by it.
- Compare self with self. If you must make comparisons, compare yourself with yourself. Galatians 4:6 says, "Each man should examine his own conduct for himself; then he can measure his achievement by comparing himself with himself and not with anyone else." Compare your apartment, salary, vehicle, and so forth now with what you had 10 or 20 years ago, not with what others have.
- Compare with those who have less. Rather than comparing yourself with people who have more, compare yourself with those who have less. Compare your apartment with the living conditions of the homeless. Compare your salary with the unemployed. Compare your vehicle with those who have no vehicle at all. Just as comparing yourself with those who are better off creates envy, so comparing yourself with those less well-off increases contentment. In fact, as you "count your blessings," you may be motivated to share them with others. Such sharing will increase your satisfaction even more!
- Accept that nothing (no thing) brings lasting happiness. No matter what you have, you will soon adapt to it and want something better, whether it is housing, salary, vehicle, position, language ability, people in church, and so forth. Research in the late 20th century showed that relationships were most highly correlated with happiness. Specifically the following relationships:
 - With God: having a meaningful religious faith
 - With others: having close friendships or a satisfying marriage
 - With yourself: having high self-esteem, being optimistic, getting enough sleep and exercise.

Although you cannot find happiness by pursuing it, happiness may find you as you are careful about comparisons, avoid envy, and

keep the Great Commandment to love God and to love others as you love yourself.

52

...about Victim Mentalities

Genesis 3:11-13 has an interesting conversation between God and his creation.

- (God to Adam) “Have you eaten?”
- (Adam to God) “The woman you put here with me...she gave me some fruit, and I ate it”.
- (God to Eve) “What have you done?”
- (Eve to God) “The serpent deceived me...and I ate.”

Both Adam and Eve admitted to doing what God had forbidden, but neither of them admitted that it was their fault. Adam basically said that it was God’s fault and Eve’s fault. Eve said that it was the serpent’s fault.

Refusing to take responsibility and blaming things on someone else goes back to the beginning. Blaming another person, blaming God, and blaming the devil are as old as the Fall into sin. This is the core of what is often called a victim mentality.

What is a victim mentality?

People with victim mentalities regard themselves as targets of the negative actions of others. They think and act as if that is the case even if there is no objective evidence that it is. Here are some other signs of a victim mentality in addition to blaming others and not accepting responsibility.

- Self pity

- Feelings of helplessness
- Focus on problems
- Complaining “If only....”
- Having a lot of “bad luck”
- Relationship problems with colleagues

Bad grades in school are because the teacher did not teach properly. Reports to the agency are late because the computer was acting up. A missionary cannot get excited about a project because the rest the staff are cliquish. He does not go to church because the preacher is boring, and the Bible classes are a drag. She cannot make friends because God made her too outspoken. Of course, these things may happen to anyone occasionally; however, that is not the case all the time.

What did Jesus do about someone with a victim mentality?

Although people often think of it as a physical healing, the problem with the man at the pool of Bethesda has many of the marks of what may have been his victim mentality (John 5: 1-15). Note that Jesus never touched him, and Jesus did not say anything about healing him. Jesus just asked him if he wanted to be healed (v 6).

The man did not answer Jesus’ question, but he gave “victim mentality reasons.”

- I have no one to help me into the pool.
- Someone else gets in ahead of me (v 7).

Jesus just ignored the man’s excuses and told him to pick up his mat and walk. (v 8). The man did just that! The only other thing that Jesus said to the man was to tell him to quit sinning or something worse may happen to him (v 14).

Jesus himself then became a victim of the Jews, they persecuted him (v 16), and they tried to kill him (v 18). Jesus was a victim, but he did not adopt a victim mentality. Instead he offered them eternal life (v 19-47).

Are there “benefits” of having a victim mentality?

If the man at the pool of Bethesda had a victim mentality for 38 years, there must be benefits for having one. Here are some.

- Get more attention from others
- Others expect less
- Others give compassion and pity
- Others listen to a recital of problems
- No guilt feelings for not doing their tasks
- Not expected to take responsibility

Unfortunately, these benefits are often short-lived. People may get burned out from listening and giving. They may quit helping the one with a victim mentality. The man at the pool had no one to help him into the pool after so long a time.

How does a victim mentality develop?

Many people may be tempted to develop a victim mentality as they face normal problems in life, and there are multiple ways to fall into it. Here are some common ways.

- Children may see it modeled by their parents, such as seeing their father blame his lack of promotions on his boss.
- Real illnesses result in added attention, compassion, and help. Those receiving such things may never get fully “well.”
- Parents may continue overprotecting their children so that the children never become independent adults.
- When employees are treated unfairly at work, colleagues may bear part of the load, but they continue to do so too long.

Since the benefits are rewarding, some people just continue wanting the benefits and develop a victim mentality. They may not realize that such behavior ultimately results in rejection. The problem is not in accepting help when it is really needed. Problems develop when people make it their lifestyle.

What can people do about victim mentalities in acquaintances?

As individuals whose calling is to help others, missionaries often attract persons having victim mentalities. After repeated attempts to help such people, the missionaries may reach the point of being irritated and drained. They need to remember that it is not their responsibility to “fix” everyone and that enabling only makes things worse in the long run. Here are some things to try when approached by those with a victim mentality.

- After listening briefly and politely, say that you will keep praying for them.
- Set firm limits in a loving way, such as saying you have only five minutes to spare.
- Break eye contact and return to your task.
- Prepare for a guilt trip attempt on you and/or unfavorable remarks to others.
- Screen your calls and do not reply to emails or texts from the “victim.”

These actions will not instantly stop attempts at involving you, but over time they usually work if you do not enable their behavior.

What can people do about victim mentalities in themselves?

Problems like this can usually be solved by prevention, correction, or some combination of the two.

- Ask God to help you not develop a victim mentality.
- When you truly are a victim, resist the temptation to continue to want the pity and attention you are given.
- If you already have a victim mentality, ask God to help you, acknowledge that mentality, resolve to stop, and intentionally take steps to do so.
- Forgive those who seemed to encourage you to develop it, both those who caused your pain and the enablers who reinforced the mentality.

- Begin to live the new life God gives you; accept responsibility to live it; and ask others to hold you accountable.
- Focus on good things you have by comparing yourself with those who have less and by expressing your gratitude to others and to God.
- Involve yourself in helping others and bring glory to God.
- When you do slip back toward a victim mentality, do not give up. Instead, ask God to forgive you and help you as you try again.

How can one develop a victor mentality?

Missionaries are all victims of Satan’s persecution, but that does not mean they must have a victim mentality. As we saw in John 15, Jesus did not develop one when he was persecuted for telling the man to pick up his mat and walk. Likewise, there is no need for missionaries today to develop one. They can develop a victor mentality because though they may be victims, they are also victors!

A victor mentality is another way of thinking, of viewing the world from a different perspective. Rather than seeing persecution as negative, people with victor mentalities see it as a blessing as Jesus said in the Beatitudes (Matthew 5). The Bible has many similar passages about victory and victors. Here are some.

- Jesus said that we would have trouble in this world but to take heart because he has overcome the world (John 16:33).
- Nothing, including trouble or hardship or persecution, can separate us from the love of Christ because we are more than conquerors through him who loves us (Romans 8: 35-37).
- Everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that overcomes the world (1 John 5:4).
- In Matthew 24 Jesus said that at the end of the age Christians would be persecuted, put to death, and hated by all nations because of him.
- Death has been swallowed up in victory. Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us

the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:54-57).

After changing the way they view the world, people can take the actions suggested in the previous section.

- Forgive others.
- Accept responsibility.
- Express gratitude.
- Help others.

We are victors, not victims!

53

...about Leadership

Like nearly all missionaries, at some time or other you are 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 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 Kisley) 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.

This brochure is just an introduction to what this book of the Bible says about Nehemiah's leadership. If you are in a position of leadership, reading this book annually (or even more often) will serve as a regular checkup for you personally as a leader and for your style of leadership. As you study his word, God himself will emphasize what you need at that particular time.

54

...about 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 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.

55

...about Each Other: From Builders to Busters

“I just don’t understand them at all.” “They are so different from me and from the missionaries who came to the field when I did.” “The way they think just doesn’t make any sense at all to me.” Who are we? Are we really different? If so, how are we different? Why are we different? Can we work together effectively? Let us explore some of these questions.

Who are we?

George Barna, founder of the Barna Research Group, has studied the characteristics of people born at different times in the United States. Three groups of such people are now in the missionary force.

- **Builders.** People born before 1945, before the end of World War II, were intent on building a comfortable lifestyle and building America into an economic and military super-power. As missionaries they were (and are) hardworking, committed, frugal, and ready to go anywhere at any time and do anything necessary to take the gospel to all people groups.
- **Boomers.** People born during the twenty years following World War II (1946-1965) were the baby boom, the “war babies.” Born into prosperity, they became well-educated, questioning,

protesting, idealistic, and tolerant of many different lifestyles. As missionaries they brought specialized knowledge, a desire to continue their personal and professional development, and a greater emphasis on caring for their families.

- **Busters.** People born during the next two decades (1965-1984) were called the baby busters because there were fewer of them. The baby busters, children of the boomers, grew up in a world different from that of any previous generation. Many who came from broken homes and were victims of violence feel alienated, forgotten, cheated, and disillusioned with life. As missionaries looking for meaning in life, they are interested in spiritual things, open, honest, and aware of their needs. As such they make good team members.

How are we different?

Builders, boomers, and busters are different in too many ways to discuss here. However, here are some of the major differences between builders and busters especially relevant to missions. Of course, the boomers are somewhere between the builders and the busters on many issues, and they have additional differences with both. All of these differences are generalizations that are not true in every case, but they are often found in members of each group.

- **Length of service.** Builders are likely to be “career” missionaries who expect to spend their lives with one people group or agency. Busters are often short-term missionaries who expect to work on a project for a few years at the most, then return home.
- **Loyalty to agency.** Builders are likely to stay with their mission for life no matter what. Busters may leave when they become dissatisfied with something in the mission.
- **Word meanings.** The missionary “family” may mean life-long commitment to certain values. Busters are more likely to think of that “family” in terms of support and relationships.
- **Expected leadership.** Builders usually respond well to authoritarian leadership, such as sitting in rows and accepting what the Bible expert tells them. Busters often want participatory

leadership, such as sitting in a circle for Bible study, a circle in which anyone's interpretation of Scripture is as valid as any other.

- Orientation. Builders are often task oriented and want to get the job done. Busters are likely to be social-emotionally oriented and believe that relationships are more important than turning in a good report to headquarters at the end of the year.
- Women's roles. Women builders usually see their part as supporting their husbands. Women busters typically want to work in equal authority with their husbands.
- Choosing an agency. Builders frequently go with an agency to which they are called or one serving a people or country to which they are called. Busters tend to go with an agency that seems the most caring—a mission that will care for them.
- Expectations of agency. Builders often ask, "What can I do for my mission?" They wonder whether the job will be big enough. Busters are more likely to ask, "What can my mission do for me?" They wonder whether the benefits package will be big enough.
- Attitude toward nationals. Builders are likely to take positions of leadership and be somewhat reluctant to turn responsibility over to the nationals. Busters often work well under the authority of the national leadership.
- Attitude toward conflict. Builders tend to deny that they are in conflict or approach the conflict indirectly. Busters usually openly acknowledge the presence of conflict and approach its resolution directly.
- Need for care. Builders tend to be independent and self-sufficient, saying they can make it on their own. Busters are much more likely to openly admit that they need help.
- Learning styles. Builders tend to be cognitive and emphasize such things as correct theology and biblical interpretation. Busters are often experiential and want time to experience God, to meditate and to relate to him.
- Spirituality and discipline. Builders are often highly disciplined and have their devotions daily. Although very interested in spiritual things, busters often find it difficult to maintain a consistent devotional life.

These differences, and many others, are not just minor ones but may be large enough to cause significant disagreement between builders and busters. On the one hand, builders may think of busters as immature, lazy, materialistic, lacking ethics or morality, disrespectful, and emotionally unstable. On the other hand busters may think of builders as rigid, inflexible, old-fashioned, cautious, predictable, boring and more interested in the past than in the future.

Why are we different?

Western culture, particularly that in the United States, between 1970 and 2000 (busters developing) was quite different from that between 1930 and 1960 (builders developing). Although builders and busters may have grown up in the same country, they grew up in quite different cultures. Since their developmental years were spent in these different cultures, they have often internalized different values.

Missionaries today are aware of the problems that face multinational teams, and they have come to terms with many of these problems. Cultural problems between missionaries from different countries have been recognized and dealt with to some extent. However, cultural problems between missionaries from the same country are often not recognized as being similar.

Included in those cross-cultural problems are the much deeper philosophical issues between modernism and postmodernism. Builders were reared under modernism, in which reason was king, individualism was prized, and scientific method yielded facts which were certain and objective. However, busters were reared under postmodernism in which experience is king, community is prized, and there are no absolutes. Over the years Christianity has grappled with modernism and come to some conclusions on which parts of it are compatible and which are not. The church has still not come to terms with postmodernism, nor separated the wheat from the chaff.

Can we work together?

Not only can builders and busters work together, they must work together. They both have strengths and weaknesses, and their strengths complement each other. However, rather than seeing themselves as being complementary, they often view themselves in conflict. Rather than complimenting each other for strong points, they tend to criticize each other for weak points.

Let us see how builders and busters can work together to help fulfill the Great Commission. To make disciples we need to be both rational and relational. On the one hand, the modernism-influenced cognitive builders may be so intent on getting the job done that they offend the very people they are trying to reach. On the other hand, the postmodernism-influenced experiential busters may spend so much time chatting with the people they are trying to reach that they do not get the job done before they leave.

Builders may spend an entire career in a relational culture and never win enough people to produce a national church filled with disciples. Busters may spend a term making great friends with people and bring them to Christ, but never actually disciple people there to leave a strong national church. However, working together effectively, with the career builders giving stability to the procession of short-term busters, may result in a sound national church.

There have always been, and will remain, generational differences between older and younger people. However these differences between builders, boomers, and busters are much deeper (cultural) issues, and they must be resolved to some extent for maximum effectiveness in carrying out the Great Commission. As these individuals from different generations form “multicultural” teams, they will find that they have the differences in the cultural values discussed here as well as other differences (music, worship style, dress, etc). However, they will also discover that their core values are the same, and their goal is the same—making disciples of all people groups.

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...about Generational Differences

A dozen years ago at the turn of the century I wrote about three generations: builders, boomers, and busters. At the time they were the only three generations involved in missions. However, since then a new generation, the millennials who matured as the new millennium began, have begun serving as missionaries. At the turn of the century, On the basis of the results reported by the Barna Research Group, I concluded that differences between the generations were basically cultural.

However, during the first decade of the new millennium, the Pew Research Center has done major research on the differences between the generations, and this research has revealed that those differences include far deeper issues, those of morality and religion. These differences can compromise cooperation and cohesion between missionaries of different generations.

What are the generations?

Although they differ on the exact years and disagree on the names used to describe them, most researchers consider a generation as covering about 20 years and name that generation after something that happened during that time.

- Builders (Also called the silent generation). Born before 1945, most builders are now 70 or more years old and are minimally involved in missions.

- Boomers. The many people born during the twenty years following World War II (1945-1964) were called the “baby boomers.” Now 50 or more years of age, the boomers were born into prosperity. They became well-educated, questioning, protesting, idealistic, and tolerant of many different lifestyles. As missionaries they brought specialized knowledge, a desire to continue their personal and professional development, and an emphasis on family.
- Busters (also called generation X). People born during the next two decades (1965-1984) were called the baby busters because there were fewer of them. Now 30 years of age and older, the busters, grew up in a world different from that of any previous generation. Many who came from broken homes and were victims of violence felt alienated, forgotten, cheated, and disillusioned with life. As missionaries looking for meaning in life, they were interested in spiritual things, open, honest, and aware of their needs. As such they make good team members.
- Millennials (also called Generation Y, Generation We, and Generation Next). People born between 1985 and 2004 were called millenials because they were the first generation to come of age in the new millennium. They grew up in the digital age with computers available to many of them. They communicated through cell phones, Skype, Facebook, and texting. They had high expectations and are characterized as confident, connected and open to change.

How do the generations differ?

During January 2010 the Pew Research Center called a nationally representative sample of more than 2000 adults through both land lines and cell phones. At this time the millennials were 18-29 years of age. To be able to do a detailed analysis of them the Pew study called more than 800 millennials and smaller samples of the other generations. The full report is available at:

<http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/files/2010/10/millennials-confident-connected-open-to-change.pdf>.

The Pew study found scores of similarities and differences. The major result that stands out is that the millennials are usually not markedly different from all the others. Rather, the differences are on a continuum, one in the order of the generations. For example, here are some questions about technology.

When asked, “Do you have a profile on a social networking site?” the percent answering yes is as follows (p. 25):

- Millennials: 75%
- Busters: 50%
- Boomers: 30%
- Builders: 6%

When asked, “Have you ever placed your cell phone on or right next to your bed while sleeping?” the percent answering yes is (p. 32):

- Millennials: 83%
- Busters: 68%
- Boomers: 50%
- Builders: 20%

Note that all the generations use technology, but some use it more than others. The same is true of nearly all of the questions asked in the Pew study, and the order of the generations is nearly always the same. Following are some specific ways the millennials are at one end of the continuum.

Technology (Chapter 4)

- More likely to text
- More likely to have cell phone only
- More likely to connect wireless to the Internet when away from home or work
- More likely to use twitter
- More likely to text while driving
- More likely to play video games
- Less likely to read newspapers

Most of these are differences with no moral or religious implications, but they do have great implications about

communication. If boomers primarily communicate via email and millennials do so through texting, they may miss important messages. All generations on a field need to agree on some way to communicate so that information sent is always received.

Everyday Life (Chapters 5, 6, and 7)

- More likely to have tattoos
- More likely to have body piercing
- More likely to quit/change jobs
- Less likely to marry by 30
- Less likely to have “old fashioned” values about marriage/family

Though most of these have no moral or religious implications, the differences in everyday life may have more emotional potential than the mechanical differences in technology. Teams would do well to discuss how important these are to each other.

Politics (Chapter 8)

- More likely to be liberal
- More likely to approve of big government
- More likely to want government to solve problems
- More likely to approve of the way society is going
- Less likely to want religion in schools
- Less likely to vote

Political differences may be a minefield. Most people do not change their political views by discussion, so this topic is probably best left alone, just agree to disagree.

Morality (Chapters 8 and 9)

- More likely to approve of abortion
- More likely to approve of homosexual behavior
- More likely to approve of pornography
- More likely to believe in evolution
- Less likely to think Hollywood threatens Christian values

Missionaries of different generations are likely to differ on whether particular actions are right or wrong. The above issues

divide people in the USA, and they may well divide missionaries on the field. It is best if each agency has positions on the most important issues, and then missionaries can decide if they can serve under those conditions. Such question should be asked, and fields should know what moral positions people take before they begin serving.

Religion (Chapter 9)

- Less likely to join church
- Less likely to attend services
- Less likely to say Bible is God’s Word
- Less likely to pray daily
- Less likely to say religion is important
- Less likely to have certain belief in God

Disagreements about religious beliefs and expected behaviors are central to the missionary enterprise. How can people who do not belong to a church and do not attend church services be church planters? How can people who do not believe in God and say that religion is not important be missionaries? Such issues must be addressed in the selection procedures of the agencies.

One interesting difference

One question has been central to the missionary enterprise from the beginning. It is “What must people do to be saved?” The church faced this issue soon after Paul and Barnabas returned from their first term of missionary service. Nearly the whole chapter of Acts 15 is about this very question. Missionaries and their sending church could not resolve the issue, so they sent a delegation to headquarters in Jerusalem. Everyone involved had “much discussion,” and all sides presented their case before they made the decision. Then they wrote a letter back to the local church and sent a delegation to answer any questions.

When asked whether Christianity was the only path to salvation in the Pew study, the generations did not follow the same order as in the previous statements. Only 23% of the builders, boomers, and busters (all very similar) agreed with the statement,

“My religion is the one true faith leading to eternal life.” However, 29% of the millenials agreed with the statement.

These findings have disturbing implications for missions. If nearly three quarters of Christians believe that “Many religions can lead to eternal life,” one of the major motivations for missionary service is missing.

In addition, the Pew study notes that nearly three quarters of the millenials agree with the statement “There is MORE than one true way to interpret the teachings of my religion.” It is interesting to note that they are more likely to say that Christianity is the only way to salvation but also more likely to say that there is more than one true way to **interpret** Christianity.

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...about Millennials in Adulthood

The Pew Research Center has been following the Millennial generation since the first ones were born in 1981. This generation now ranges in age from 18-33, and it now comprises one third of the people from which missionaries are selected. Because they are now adults, the Pew Research Center conducted three surveys between January 23 and February 26, 2014.

New generations always differ from previous ones, and that has been the case with the Millennials. At the turn of the century, they were different from the Builders, Boomers, and Busters, but those differences between the generations were primarily cultural. A decade into the 21st century Pew research revealed that some of the differences included more important issues of morality and religion.

The results of the 2014 studies were released in early March as *Millennials in Adulthood: Detached from Institutions, Networked with Friends* available at <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2014/03/07/Millennials-in-adulthood/>. This 68-page document reveals that the majority of Millennials have some characteristics that may require the attention of mission agencies. Even the subtitle of the 2014 report is quite different from the 2010 report which was “*confident, connected, and open to change.*”

Different

Many of these differences between Millennials and previous generations are neutral and potentially valuable advantages. The first paragraph of the report describes Millennials as “relatively unattached to organized politics and religion, linked by social media, burdened by debt, distrustful of people, in no rush to marry, optimistic about the future...and racially diverse” (p. 4). Some of these characteristics are neutral or positive.

- Unattached to organized politics
- Linked by social media
- No rush to marry
- Optimistic about the future
- Racially diverse

However, other characteristics may be a hindrance to being a missionary.

- Unattached to religion
- Burdened by debt
- Distrustful of people

Additional characteristics found in the majority of Millennials in the studies may be even more problematic. These characteristics are listed below and include the page numbers on which they appear in the report.

Not religious

Nearly two-thirds (64%) of the Millennials did not see themselves as religious. Only 36% of them said that the phrase “a religious person” described them very well (pp. 14,45). In addition more than four in ten (42%) of Millennials said that they either did not believe in God or were not sure about his existence (p. 13). Nearly three-in-ten (29%) said they were not affiliated with any religion at all, the highest levels that Pew studies have found while conducting this series of generational studies (p. 4).

If an agency’s goal is to provide humanitarian aid, Millennials may be effective in that work. However, if the agency’s goal is to

bring people to faith in God, people who see themselves as nonreligious and question God’s existence are not likely to be effective missionaries. They would not be likely to believe that Jesus is “the way, the truth, and the life,” and that there is no other way to God other than through him (John 14:6).

Unmarried—with children

Nearly three quarters (74%) of Millennials were unmarried, and the average age of first marriage was 29 for men and 27 for women, the highest ages in modern history (pp. 5, 9). Fewer Millennials were married (26%) than was true of any of the other generations when 18-23 years of age.

Not marrying does not mean that Millennials were avoiding co-habiting and sex outside marriage. Millennials had more out-of-wedlock births than any of the other generations. In 2012 nearly half (47%) of births to Millennials were to women who were not married (p. 10).

Like the other generations, Millennials believed that it was a “bad thing for American society that more children are being raised by single parents” (pp. 43). However, Millennials lead all generations in out-of-wedlock births (p. 10).

If the agencies’ goals include promoting sexual purity and intact families, many Millennials may be poor examples.

Support homosexual marriage

More than two-thirds (68%) of Millennials favored allowing gays and lesbians to marry (p. 31). More than half (51%) of Millennials said that “a supporter of gay rights” described them very well (p. 14). More than a third (35%) of Millennials said that it was a good thing for society if gay and lesbian couples raised children (p. 42).

Both the Old Testament and the New Testament (Leviticus 18 and Romans 1) forbid homosexual behavior. Millennials seem to be very much like the people mentioned in Romans 1:32, those who

know God's decrees but continue to violate them and approve of others who violate them as well.

In the USA, homosexual activity was considered a sin, then it became a crime, then it became a psychological disorder. Finally, in 1973 it was declared to be just an alternate lifestyle. Until about a decade into the 21st century, marriage was only between a man and a woman. Then some cultures redefined marriage. If the agency believes that marriage is between men and women only, Millennials may not be a good fit.

Distrust people

More than three quarters (81%) of Millennials said they did not trust people. When asked, "Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people?" only 19 % of Millennials said that most people can be trusted (p 7). Older generations were more likely to trust people.

Millennials may be less likely to trust others in their agency and less likely to trust nationals, even leaders of the national church. This may lead to creating discontent or even premature departure from the field.

Burdened with debt

Two-thirds of millennials recently receiving bachelor's degrees have unpaid student loans, and their average debt is about \$27,000. Millennials are the best-educated generational group in American history. A third of Millennials ages 26 to 33 have a four-year college degree (or more); however, they also have record levels of student debt. Two decades ago, when the Gen Xs were graduating, only half of them had college debt, and the average debt was only \$15,000 (p. 9).

Many agencies do not accept individuals with debt, so two thirds of the Millennials will not be acceptable, and it will be years before they will be able to serve. By the time they have paid off their

loans, many of them are likely to have roots in their communities and a mortgage to pay.

Less Conservative

More than two-thirds (69%) of Millennials support the legalization of marijuana (p. 32). There is nothing wrong being less conservative on some things, such as politics, and Millennials are more liberal politically (p. 23, 39). However, previous sections show that they are also less conservative on social issues, such as supporting homosexual marriage and bearing children out of wedlock. They are less conservative about many social issues, including the use of drugs.

Many agencies have policies about the use of psychoactive drugs, and such liberal views may conflict with those policies. Also, if Millennials are serving in a country that exports marijuana or other drugs to the USA, such positions may cause problems.

Implications

This brochure is not intended to be a summary of the Pew report. That report is 68 pages long and covers many other issues, such as political trends, social trends, and technology. Readers are urged to download the report and to read not only the pages cited here but also the entire report and the appendices giving the details of the research including exactly how the questions were worded and asked. The issues discussed here have been chosen by the author as ones likely to lead to difficulties if Millennials become missionaries. Here are suggestions about actions that may help agencies and missionaries on the field.

First, selection. Some agencies may prefer not to have people with such views as members. Knowing that the majority of Millennials hold these positions, as well as many others covered in the report and previous Pew reports, those agencies can detect and screen potential members out during their selection process.

Questions about these issues may be included in written information requested when potential missionaries apply, and then interviewers can explore them in depth and interpret them in the context of the person as a whole.

Second, supervision. If the agency wants to admit people holding such positions, it may want to have some sort of supervision in place to monitor how these positions influence performance during service. This may be in the form of mentors assigned to the candidates or in the form of field directors observing what the candidate is doing relative to these issues.

Again, this is not meant to imply that all Millennials in that 18-33 year old category have any or all of these characteristics. It is meant to point out that they are very prevalent in this group of people and agencies need to be aware of them.

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...about Conflict

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.

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...about Confrontation

Suppose Don, the Bible professor at the African seminary, returned to his host country from his year of home ministry assignment with some new ideas. In addition to visiting supporters and raising funds, he had taken some graduate level Bible courses to broaden his perspective.

His former seminary students, about to graduate, immediately noticed that he had changed in some very basic ways. Rather than talking about humanity’s need of salvation from sin, he emphasized that God is a god of love. He pointed out that 2 Peter 3:9 states that God is not willing that anyone should perish but wants everyone to repent. Since it is God’s will that everyone repent, the students did not need to preach repentance because it would happen without them.

Instead, they needed to emphasize that human beings are to rule over the earth and care for it, as Adam did in the early chapters of Genesis. He suggested that they organize their future congregations to pick up trash along roads and paths as well as other such things to care for the earth.

At first his students were quite confused, but soon some of them agreed and began to pick up trash themselves. Other missionaries felt quite uneasy about this, and several urged the field director to confront the professor. However, the field director was a math major in college and had taught at the international school for years. He did not feel qualified to challenge a theologian when it came to the Bible. What should be done in such a case?

What does the Bible say?

The Bible has a clear case of one missionary confronting another in Galatians 2. In Acts 10-11 God appeared to have clarified to the apostles that Jews and Gentiles should be treated equally. Peter was the major one to take that position, and he explained what God had revealed to him. In fact, Peter, one of the twelve, became known as “an apostle to the Jews,” which today would probably be called something like the “Director of Home Missions” (Galatians 2:8).

Unlike Peter, Paul had not been a follower of Jesus while Jesus lived on earth. In fact, Paul had persecuted Jesus’ followers until Jesus confronted him on his way to Damascus. This led to Paul’s conversion when God sent Ananias to restore his sight. At that time God told Ananias that Paul was the one chosen to take the gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 9). In fact, Paul became known as “an apostle to the Gentiles,” which today would probably be something like the “Director of Cross-Cultural Missions” (Galatians 2:8).

Peter treated Jews and Gentiles alike until some men from Jerusalem, now often called Judaizers, influenced him. These men maintained that the converted Gentiles had to follow all Jewish customs. Peter had been eating with the Gentiles, but when the Judaizers came, Peter began to separate from the Gentiles for fear of the Judaizers (Galatians 2:12). This was clearly wrong, so Paul confronted Peter about it.

Isn’t it hard to confront missionaries?

Yes, confronting other missionaries is probably the most difficult thing missionaries do. In the early 1980s Dorothy Gish surveyed 547 missionaries serving in many countries with many agencies to rate how stressful 65 items were to them. The most stressful thing was “Confronting Others When Necessary.” This was more stressful than such things as communicating across language and cultural barriers, amount of work, or frequent moving. This study

was published as “Sources of Missionary Stress” in the 1983 *Journal of Psychology and Theology*.

In the 1990s Joan Carter asked 306 CMA missionaries serving on 13 fields during an 8-year period to rate sources of stress. This data was collected through on-site visits and included additional possible stressors. The top dozen stressors were consistent with those Gish found, and the stress rating was even higher than Gish had found a decade earlier. “Confronting Others When Necessary” tied for the top rating. This study was published in the *Journal of Psychology and Theology* in 1999 as “Missionary Stressors and Implications for Care.”

There is no question that confronting other missionaries is very difficult and generates much stress.

When should missionaries be confronted?

Confrontation may lead to serious interpersonal problems, so it is best to do it over only very serious issues. The person confronting must judge whether or not it is worth the risk. Paul specified two reasons for his confrontation with Peter.

- First: “He (Peter) was clearly in the wrong” (Galatians 2:11). God had made it clear to Peter that Jews and Gentiles must be treated equally. Peter had made a strong defense of this to others, so he not only knew about it but also he had clearly explained it to others (Acts 10-11). Today we also have the New Testament with clear statements about what is right and wrong
- Second: “The other Jews joined him (Peter)” (Galatians 2:13). Not only was Peter doing something wrong but also he was influencing others to do it. Even Barnabas (Paul’s missionary colleague during their first term of service) was led astray. When a person is influencing others to do wrong, he or she must be confronted.

These are situations which clearly call for confrontation. Much of the time things are not as evident. Should a missionary be confronted about his dog’s behavior? What about if his dog barks too much? What about if her dog has bitten several TCKs? Should a

teacher be confronted about his behavior? What if she is grading too hard? What if he has molested a student?

Who should confront missionaries?

Most agencies have a hierarchy in which it is clear where each member “ranks.” That is, usually the administrators at headquarters are above people serving on the field. Among missionaries serving in other countries there may be one person responsible for a continent, then other persons responsible for each country, and even persons responsible for regions within the country. There may be field directors over city coordinators, and so forth. In these cases, the persons at the higher level are responsible for the people they supervise, and these leaders should be the ones to confront those below them when needed.

Unfortunately, this does not always work as planned. In such cases, it is appropriate for missionaries to confront others at their own level. Note that Paul and Peter were both at the same level. Peter was “an apostle to the Jews” and Paul was “an apostle to the Gentiles.” Confrontation was appropriate.

Of course, there are some “wrongs” that must be reported on moral grounds even if not legally required. For example, sexual molestation of a child or adolescent, child abuse, and spouse abuse must be stopped. Such behavior is very likely to be repeated, and it must be halted immediately.

How does one confront missionaries?

One time when Peter came to Antioch, Paul said, “I opposed him to his face” (Galatians 2:11). This is still the best way to confront another missionary. When people talk face-to-face, they are the most likely to communicate correctly because they have the most cues that give information. They can hear each other, including the volume, tone, any tremor, and so forth. They can see each other including motions of the body, facial expressions, eyes, and so forth. Replies take place immediately.

Today we have many means of communication, but none of them are as good as face-to-face. Missionaries can communicate via telephone, texting, Skype, twitter, Facebook, and so forth. Some of these means of communication are better than others. For instance, with Skype the two people can see and hear to some extent, with the phone one can hear the voice, but not see. With email replies may take some time, texting gives only a brief written message, and twitter allows only 140 characters. None of these can match the face-to-face method Paul used to confront Peter.

Where does one confront missionaries?

When Paul saw that they (Peter, Barnabas, and the Jews) were not acting in line with the gospel truth, he confronted Peter “in front of them all” (Galatians 2:14). All of those present, including Barnabas, were clearly in the wrong.

Although some missionaries react negatively to Paul confronting Peter in front of the others, this was probably appropriate for the situation. This was essentially a confrontation of everyone there. All were offenders, and all needed to hear what Paul said because they were as guilty as Peter.

If Peter were the only one that had been shunning the Gentiles, Paul probably would have used something similar to what Jesus commanded in Matthew 18:15-17. This was how Jesus said individuals were to confront each other about sin.

- First. One person was to confront the other alone, and no one else knew.
- Second. If the first step was not successful, then the person was to take two other people along and talk to the offender, and the only others who knew about the problem were the two witnesses.
- Third. If the second step was not successful, then the whole issue could be brought before the whole church. Then everyone in the church knew.
- Finally. If the third step was not successful, then the church would treat the offender as a pagan.

Although confrontation is very difficult, sometimes it is absolutely necessary. When such confrontation is needed, someone who is sensitive must do it.

60

...about Forgiveness

As fellow missionaries, they were your closest friends. They had prayed with you for the last six months as you developed a plan to reach the people in your city. It was successful beyond your wildest dreams. But now they had a book coming out about your plan—claiming it as their own! Of course, you are glad for the success in reaching people, but how could they have done that? Can you ever forgive them? Even if you can forgive them, can you ever forget it, or can you ever really trust them again? Let us consider some of these questions.

How could they have done that?

Being hurt by someone you love is inevitable. Sometimes the people hurting you do it intentionally, planning it carefully and then carrying out their plot. Other times they do something without forethought. Most often they do not intend to hurt you and do not even know they have done so. The Old Testament clearly distinguishes between intentional and unintentional sins.

Having your brother or sister turn on you is as old as the human race itself, as found in the story of Cain and Abel in Genesis 4. It occurred repeatedly in the book of Genesis, as shown in the life of Joseph and his brothers who first planned to kill him, but then decided just to sell him as a slave. How could they have done that?

Sometimes you are the one who is amazed at what you do. The first missionary, Paul, wrote about this in himself in Romans 7. He just did not understand why he did what he did. He did not do the things he wanted to do, but he did the things he hated. Paul was saying, “How could I have done that?”

What if I can’t forgive?

When praying the Lord’s Prayer, we ask God to forgive us as we forgive others. Following that prayer in Matthew 6, Jesus said that if we forgive people who sin against us, he will forgive us. However, if we do not forgive others, he will not forgive us. He illustrated this in Matthew 18 with the parable of the unforgiving servant when Peter asked about how often to forgive. The one not forgiven was the one who did not forgive.

The goal is always forgiveness, but the time it takes to reach that goal may be very different for different offenses and for different people. You must be careful not to rush into a premature, shallow forgiveness, in which you say, “I forgive you,” but still really hold the offense against the other person. Generally the more serious the offense, the longer it takes to reach genuine forgiveness. If someone “borrows” an everyday dish without asking and breaks it, forgiveness may come quickly. If the dish was a treasured family heirloom, the forgiveness may take longer. If the offense is sexual abuse as a child or adolescent, the forgiveness may take years or decades. We must not rush into premature forgiveness.

People often cite Joseph’s clear forgiveness of his brothers in the last chapter of Genesis as an example of how we should forgive. Remember that it was more than 20 years after the offense when he first saw his brothers, and the first time he saw them (Genesis 42) he pretended to be a stranger and spoke harshly to them. By the time they came the second time, he was ready to begin to deal with forgiveness.

What if I can’t forget?

You will probably never actually forget. Forgiveness does not mean that you are no longer able to remember the incident. Some people say we should “forgive and forget.” Others quote Jeremiah 31:34 and Hebrews 10:17, pointing out that God forgives and forgets.

Of course, this does not mean that God literally cannot remember that the events ever happened. If that were the case, God would no longer be all knowing. He still knows that the sin occurred, but he no longer holds it against the person. He does not develop amnesia, but he will never bring that sin up again.

Of course, not having the memory constantly occurring as it once did may be a result of forgiveness, but it is not the means of forgiveness. Forgiveness literally means to “give up” or “give away.” The dictionary defines it as “to give up resentment against” someone. Forgiving someone frees you from being consumed with resentment about the offense, but it does not erase the memory. You may need that memory to avoid future abuses from an unrepentant person. God does not erase our memories, but he redeems them so that we can get on with our lives.

Joseph pointed out that his brothers had intended to harm him, but that God used it for good. He had not forgotten what happened 40 years earlier, but he no longer carried the resentment and wanted to punish them (Genesis 50).

What if I still don’t like them?

You may never really like people who have hurt you so deeply. Forgiveness and reconciliation are two different things. Forgiveness means that you give up your resentment and your desire to punish the other person, not that you necessarily become best friends.

You may say, “Doesn’t God want us to love everyone?” Of course, he does. Such is commanded in “love one another as I have loved you.” But the kind of love that can be commanded is *agape* love. It is the kind of love in which you make a decision to be

committed to the best interests of that person. It does not necessarily mean that you are good friends (*phileo*). Unfortunately, the English language does not have adequate words to express the meanings of these Greek words, so we use the word “love” for both.

God commands you to be committed to the best interests of all persons, not to be best friends with them all. After some time, you may grow to like the person and become good friends, but that will not always be the case. Notice that Joseph was kind to his brothers, reassured them, told them not to be afraid and said he would provide for them and their children. He did not say they were his best buddies, and he clearly favored Benjamin over the others, the ones who sold him into slavery.

Even though you may not be the best of friends with others who have hurt you, you can still work effectively with them. Being willing to forgive others benefits you as much as it does them. It frees you from carrying that resentment, freeing you to do God’s work.

What if they don’t ask for forgiveness?

This is a difficult situation. It is complicated to try to come to terms with someone unwilling to accept responsibility for actions that have offended or hurt you. We are often tempted to become resentful. Unfortunately, carrying around the resentment and bitterness is a heavy burden, and that burden is on you, not the one who offended. You may be carrying such a load related to someone you will never see again; that person may even be dead. Being willing to forgive, being open to forgiving when they repent, or forgiving before God even if you cannot see the person lifts the load from you.

Thus, granting forgiveness, or turning the final judgment to God, is often more for your own sake than for those you forgive. Joseph granted forgiveness to his brothers even though they did not ask for it. The burden was taken from him, and he could get on with his life. If you continue to carry that load, many times you are granting the offender the power to continue to make you miserable and limit your effectiveness.

Why is it so hard to ask forgiveness?

The basic problem is usually pride. You have to admit that you have done something wrong, and that is very difficult to do. Many people find it much easier just to sweep the matter under the rug and say that the offense did not really matter that much, but it does. Until forgiveness is sought, something remains to hinder any relationship.

Since they move so often, some missionaries find it easy to just leave, thinking that the offense will be forgotten. However, that is not the case. The matter will still be there in the relationship whenever they meet again. Asking, giving, and receiving forgiveness are especially important parts of saying good-bye when leaving the field to return home.

Why is it sometimes so hard to accept forgiveness?

This also often goes back to pride. We often feel like we must do something to earn forgiveness. Forgiving others is against our concept of justice in which people should suffer for the wrong they have done. Forgiving others does not come naturally to humans. However, God gives forgiveness to everyone who asks because Christ paid the debt through his suffering on the cross. The Bible clearly states that forgiveness is by grace, through faith, and even that is God’s gift to us. Although we can repent and make restitution, we can never earn our forgiveness, only accept it.

In Genesis 50 Joseph’s brothers had not really accepted his forgiveness 17 years after Joseph had granted it to them. They were still carrying feelings of guilt and fear for an offense that was forgiven. They asked for something (forgiveness) that had been granted nearly two decades before.

What if they won’t forgive?

You may ask forgiveness, but the other party will not grant it. This is also a difficult situation. You must genuinely request

forgiveness, make restitution as far possible, and continue to demonstrate acts consistent with repentance. If the other persons will still not grant forgiveness, you have done all you can. The burden is now on them. You may still feel some of that burden, but God does not hold you responsible.

61

...about Reconciliation

After a serious disagreement with other missionaries, you have settled your differences. You have asked for, received, and granted forgiveness, but something still seems wrong. Although you do not sense any anger in the relationship, your friendship is not the same as it was before. Forgiveness literally means to “give up” or “give away.” The dictionary defines it as “to give up resentment against” someone. That is a necessary first step in reconciliation—but much more is possible. Let us see what we can do, how we do it, and what are some possible results.

What does “maundy” mean?

Just before Easter Sunday we observe Maundy Thursday. Many people have no idea what “maundy” means. It comes from the Latin *mande*, meaning “mandate” or “command,” from Jesus words in John 13:34. At that time he was talking with people he had poured his life into during their time of orientation and training. They had three years ministry experience in their passport culture, had some short-term home mission experience, and were about to enter cross-cultural ministry. They were people who had affirmed their devotion and vowed to die for him but would soon doubt, deny, and forsake him.

His Maundy Thursday mandate (command) to them was “Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one

another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” Today, as then, people fulfilling the Great Commission (making disciples of all nations) must be recognized as his disciples. However, there would soon be dissension among Jesus’ disciples that would necessitate forgiveness and reconciliation.

Go and be reconciled.

Earlier in his ministry Jesus had told his disciples that while they were worshipping him in the sanctuary they might remember that a fellow Christian had something against them. If that happened, they were to leave their place of worship and, “First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift” (Matthew 5:24). Reconciliation should take place as soon as possible after we realize we need it. Of course, one must be careful not to attempt it immediately after the offense while emotions are still highly aroused and may interfere.

Reconciliation literally means to “bring together again.” The dictionary defines it as “to make friendly again or win over to a friendly attitude.” Although forgiveness has occurred, friendship may not have yet been restored, and that is what is missing. Forgiveness may involve only one person, but reconciliation always takes two.

Note that here we are talking about restoring a relationship between you and someone you know has something against you. We are not talking about the situation in Matthew 18 which involves you having something against another person.

How do I do it?

People are sometimes unsure of how to go about actually moving toward reconciliation. Fred DiBlasio has developed several steps he uses to help people through forgiveness and into reconciliation. After defining, considering scriptures on, and explaining forgiveness and reconciliation, he introduces the following steps. Then after reviewing the steps, he asks if the people want to go

through them toward reconciliation. If so, they proceed. If not, they wait.

- The offender states and explains the offense. He or she clearly, specifically, and explicitly states the act for which he or she is seeking forgiveness and reconciliation. He or she then follows with an explanation of the reason behind the offensive behavior.
- Both parties ask questions and receive answers about what happened, and this information may begin to bring them together.
- The offended shares his or her emotional reaction (with the permission of the offender). This ventilating of feelings in detail often leads to the offender being more empathic.
- The offender then paraphrases what was said and proposes a plan. Expressing the feelings in other words usually leads to even greater empathy, and then he or she proposes a plan (including specific changes and means of accountability) that will eliminate the behavior.
- The offended then identifies with the offender. Realizing that he or she is not completely faultless, the offended may be able to identify with some of the guilt, loneliness, etc. that the offender has experienced since the act.
- Both persons must agree on what forgiveness and the first steps toward reconciliation mean. Granting forgiveness means that the offense can never again be used as a weapon--it is a letting go, but not necessarily forgetting. The one receiving forgiveness must remember that he or she has agreed to be accountable and not repeat the offense.
- The offender then makes a formal request for forgiveness and reconciliation for the action in question. This may include asking God as well and the formal recording of the date, time and place of the request.
- The offended then either grants, or refuses to grant, forgiveness and movement toward reconciliation. If granted, it is recorded with the request. If not granted, the process stops here, and may be resumed at a later time.

This cycle is then repeated as often as necessary until all offensive actions have been discussed. It usually includes both parties

taking turns being the offended and the offender. However, no one is allowed to pressure another person to ask forgiveness for perceived wrong behavior. Also remember that although forgiveness is final in this process, much emotion may remain and full reconciliation may take much more time.

Go and do it.

Although we may ask how to go about reconciliation, most of us already know how to do it. The problem is in actually getting up and doing it. We tend to be like the expert who asked Jesus what he had to do to inherit eternal life in Luke 10. Jesus asked him what the scripture said. The man answered correctly, and Jesus said, “Do this and you will live” (v. 10). Rather than doing it, the man wanted to justify himself and asked who his neighbor was. After the parable in which the two religious leaders passed by the needy person who was finally helped by someone from a despised culture, Jesus again asked the expert who was the real neighbor. When the expert answered correctly, Jesus again said, “Go and do likewise” (v. 37).

Will everything be the same?

Certainly not immediately, and perhaps never. Remember that this is just the beginning of reconciliation, and it may take months or years to complete. Trust takes a long time to develop. Just one wrong act may destroy it, and then it will take even longer to develop again. Sometimes it never fully develops after it has been destroyed. The following will help rebuild trust.

- Carry out every detail of the plan you have proposed to see that the offensive behavior will not be repeated.
- Be completely accountable as you have proposed.
- If you do engage in some wrong action, apologize immediately and sincerely.
- Always keep your word on other things.
- Be completely and consistently trustworthy in all dealings with others.

- Trust others yourself.
- Be openly and consistently cooperative.

John Mark had deserted the first missionary team to take the gospel to other cultures. Although his uncle Barnabas wanted to take his nephew when the team went back for a second term, Paul had not yet reconciled with Mark and would not take Mark on his team. However, forgiveness and reconciliation came later as indicated by Paul saying, “Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry” (2 Timothy 4:11).

What if the person refuses?

Sometimes the person refuses, as was the case with Samuel and Saul in 1 Samuel 15. Although Saul’s repentance (“I have sinned....Now I beg you, forgive my sin....” vs. 24-25) sounds sincere, it came only after two denials in which he blamed the soldiers (vs. 13-15; 20-21). After that incident, Samuel never went to see Saul again (v. 35). Some offenses are so serious, and some requests for forgiveness are so insincere, that the process stops and never begins again.

Whether the process continues depends on such things as the seriousness and duration of the offense. For example, it is much easier to reconcile after an argument over forgetting your spouse at the store than it is over adultery. Likewise it is easier (though still very difficult) to forgive your spouse over a single act of adultery on impulse than over a long affair with “a friend.”

Sometimes the process ends because the other person simply refuses. Such a refusal may be temporary, or it may be permanent. All that God asks of you is that you sincerely repent, enlist the aid of a mediator, and try everything you know to do. Reconciliation takes two people, and the other person may continue to refuse. Paul, that early missionary, put it so well in the last half of Romans 12. He said, “Be devoted to one another (v. 10)... Live in harmony with one another (v. 16)... If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone” (v. 18). The ideal is to be reconciled to everyone, but sometimes you have done everything you can do and it

still does not happen. God does not hold you responsible for someone else's refusal to proceed.

62

...about Thankfulness

It is one of those days! When you leave the house in a hurry, your car will not start. After a crowded bus ride one of your colleagues meets you at the door to the building and tells you how one of the nationals has been lying about you. When you open your door, the office is a mess because someone had broken in during the night and trashed it looking for valuables that were not there. A few minutes later your spouse calls to say that two of your kids just woke up with high fevers.

Looking for some sympathy and encouragement, you approached a friend and began to tell what had happened. Before you could finish, your friend said: "Remember that Paul, an early missionary, wrote to the people in one of his churches, 'Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.'" When you protested that Paul could not have really meant that, your friend pointed out that earlier in the sentence Paul said, "Be joyful always" (1 Thessalonians 1:16-18).

You began to ask questions. Why be thankful? What if I don't feel like I have anything to be thankful for? Whom do I thank? What else does the Bible say? Let us consider these questions and more.

Why be thankful?

Of course, one answer to that question is that the Bible says so. However, in recent years Robert Emmons, one of the leading scholars in positive psychology, and his colleagues have studied the effect of gratitude on individuals. They have found that gratitude, wanting what you have, can measurably change people's lives for the better. Thankful people have the following characteristics.

- More alert and enthusiastic
- More determined and attentive
- More energetic and optimistic
- More progress toward goals
- More exercise and better sleep
- More forgiving and helpful to others
- Higher immune response/less illness
- Closer family ties
- Less stress and envy
- Less resentment and greed
- Less bitterness and depression

What does the Bible say?

The Bible has dozens of references to thankfulness, often several in a single chapter.

- "...give thanks to the Lord..." (Psalm 107:1, 8, 15, 21, 31).
- "...give thanks to the Lord..." (Psalm 118:1, 19, 29).
- "...give you (God) thanks..." (Psalm 118: 21, 28).
- "...give thanks to the Lord..." (Psalm 136:1, 3).
- "...give thanks to the God of..." (Psalm 136:2, 26).

Since Paul was a missionary, what did he say in addition to telling people to give thanks in all circumstances? He was most often thankful for the nationals, even though they were far from perfect.

- For the Thessalonians (1 Thessalonians 1:2): "We always thank God for all of you."

- For the Philippians (1:3): "I thank my God every time I remember you."
- For the Colossians (1:3): "We always thank God...when we pray for you."
- For the Ephesians (1:16): "I have not stopped giving thanks for you."
- Even for the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 1:4): "I always thank God for you."

What does it mean to be thankful?

Being thankful means much more than children writing obligatory thank-you notes to Grandma for their birthday presents because their mothers insisted (Grandma may not give such a nice one next year). It is also more than the warm feelings one has upon receiving a gift.

When people are grateful, they recognize that the benefit they received was not earned or deserved; it was given freely by someone out of love or compassion. The word "gratitude" comes from the Latin *gratus*, from which we also get the theological term "grace." When people say that they have received something by the grace of God, they know that they did nothing to deserve it, that it was given out of God's love and care for them. The same is true when people give.

Unfortunately, most people have high expectations and take things for granted. When something good happens, they tend to assume they are responsible for it, that they earned it or at least deserved it because of who they are or what they have done.

Gratitude researchers point out that being thankful involves recognition and acknowledgment.

- Recognition. This means that people must literally re-cognize, that is, think differently about something. For example, they may have resented something that caused suffering, but they re-cognize the adversity to see that it resulted in growth that would have not been possible any other way.

- **Acknowledgement.** In addition to thinking about adversity differently, people must accept the good in their lives and affirm that there are good and enjoyable things in the world. They must have the humility to agree that they did nothing to earn or deserve the good that has come their way. Someone has purposely been kind to them, and that kindness has really helped them.

For example, losing jobs may force people into new vocations that are wonderful opportunities, but they have to recognize that fact to be thankful, to realize that they have received a benefit. Illnesses may prevent people from accomplishing some things but may also push them into other pursuits that are much better.

What if I feel like I have nothing to be thankful for?

This is a question most often asked by people who live in affluence. They are people who fail to see the splendor of the rainbows through the rain or the beauty of the “weeds” in their lawns.

This “poverty of affluence” results from two things. First, people adapt to a culture of plenty, and then they need more to make them feel “thankful.” Of course, soon after they get “more,” they want even more. Second, people tend to compare themselves with neighbors who have even more. This comparison makes them feel like they have so little there is nothing to be thankful for. Again as soon as they get what one neighbor has, they compare themselves to a different neighbor, and they are again dissatisfied.

People who are alive and have basic needs met have much to be thankful for. They just need to re-cognize and acknowledge their situation

What can I do?

People cannot conjure up true gratitude at a moment’s notice. No one can try to be grateful and through willpower make it happen. An old saying states that “happiness pursued, eludes.” However, people can develop habits that, over time, will result in the disposition of thankfulness.

The old hymn, “Count Your Blessings,” is the answer. It says that when you are discouraged, in conflict, burdened, and see how much others have, you should “Count your blessings, name them one by one; count your many blessings, see what God has done.” Here are some proven effective ways to do that.

- **Keep a gratitude journal.** Each day actually write down the gifts, grace, and good things you enjoy. There is no need to worry about spelling or punctuation or have a fancy journal. Actually writing them down is far more effective than just thinking about them.
- **Thank God.** The Bible is filled with prayers of thanksgiving in the Psalms and other places that you can pray to God yourself. Churches have ritual prayers of gratitude you may want to memorize. Conversational spontaneous prayers are also effective.
- **Use your senses.** Take time to attend to what you see, hear, touch, taste, and smell. Odors often take you back to earlier good times. Songs bring back memories. Other sensations do the same.
- **Take a walk of thanks.** Walk through your neighborhood, your house, your school, or your church. What you see, hear, and smell will bring back memories.
- **Watch your language.** Depressed people often engage in negative self-talk. Thankful people engage in positive self-talk. You can change your attitude by changing what you say to yourself.
- **Do something for others.** When you do things that benefit others (for which they are grateful), you will find that you will become grateful yourself. Doing something for those who do not like us is particularly effective.
- **Thank others.** Gratitude is not just thoughts and emotions; it is actions as well. Verbally thank someone. Write a letter of thanks. Send an email of thanks.
- **Make a gratitude visit.** Deliver your letter of thanks in person rather than sending it through the mail.
- **Make a gratitude phone call.**

In all circumstances?

Paul actually lived what he wrote. In his letter to the Philippians the words *joy* and *rejoice* occur fourteen times in the four chapters. He wrote that letter from prison while awaiting a trial which could result in his death.

From his cell Paul wrote, “I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well-fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want (Philippians 4:11-12).

63**...about Nepotism**

Your field director’s nephew is coming to teach at the international school for a year. Knowing that a long-term family will be returning to their passport country for a year, the field director assigns his nephew’s family to their beautiful, large home for that year. If he does this, no one else will have to move unnecessarily. When the field director asks if you think that is a good idea, you agree that it is.

About a month later another family serving with you is really angry that the field director showed so much favoritism to his nephew. This family had already served three years of their four-year term, and they had hoped they could move into that beautiful home which was so much larger—and it had a pool as well. They start complaining about the blatant nepotism shown by the field director.

What is nepotism?

Nepotism is the showing of favoritism toward relatives based on that relationship rather than on objective factors such as ability or merit. For example, nepotism would be hiring a person with a master’s degree in fashion design as an elementary principal because she is the niece of the school board chairman rather than hiring an applicant with a doctoral degree in education who has taught elementary school for a decade.

This family-based favoritism over competence often leads to low morale, low productivity, and a seeming lack of integrity to some.

Did it occur in Bible times?

Of course, it did. It was part of the Jewish culture in the Old Testament. In fact, it was the major factor in people becoming priests or kings.

The whole book of Leviticus details the system of laws governing the Levites. Priests had to be descendants of Aaron, brother of Moses, and of the tribe of Levi. Sometimes the children of priests were good, and at other times they were bad, unfit to be priests. The sons of Eli the priest (1 Samuel 1-4) were also serving as priests, but they treated the Lord's offering with contempt and seduced the women serving at the entrance to God's house. Nepotism did not lead to good.

Before Israel was ruled by kings, Gideon realized that political power should not depend on nepotism. When the Israelites asked Gideon, his son, and his grandson to rule over them, Gideon said he would not do so and neither would his son (Judges 8:22-23).

After Israel began being ruled by kings, the king's oldest son became the next king unless there was a coup. After division of the kingdom, the Northern Kingdom (Israel) had all evil kings. Nepotism did not lead to good. Sometimes a good king in the Southern Kingdom (Judah) had a good son, but other times the son was evil. Here are some examples from over 200 years of successive rulers of Judah.

- Uzziah, good (52 years, 2 Chronicles 26)
- Jotham, good (16 years, 2 Chronicles 27)
- Ahaz, evil (16 years, 2 Chronicles 28)
- Hezekiah, good (29 years, 2 Chronicles 29-32)
- Manasseh, evil (55 years, 2 Chronicles 33)
- Amon, evil (2 years, 2 Chronicles 33)
- Josiah, good (31 years, 2 Chronicles 34-35)

Did it occur in the church?

Of course it did. In fact, that is where the term "nepotism" originated. The Latin word *nepos* means "nephew" or "grandchild." The suffix *-ism* comes from the favoritism popes showed to their relatives in appointing them to positions in the church.

Since the popes had taken vows of chastity and had no children of their own, they most often appointed their nephews (*nepos*) to become cardinals. The cardinals then chose a new pope when one died, and it was often another cardinal in the family—thus papal "dynasties."

This practice began shortly after 1000 AD and continued until Pope Paul III appointed two nephews (one 14 years old and the other 16 years old) as cardinals. A papal bull in 1692 finally prohibited appointing more than one qualified relative as cardinal. The practice of promoting family members continues to some extent in many churches today.

Did it occur in missions?

It has been happening in missions since the second term of Christian missionary service (Acts 15:36-41). Paul proposed a second term to Barnabas, a teammate on their first term. Barnabas wanted to take his cousin, John Mark. Paul did not think it was wise to take someone who had deserted them during their first term. Paul and Barnabas parted company, and Barnabas took John Mark with him to a different place of service.

Nepotism still occurs in missions today, probably most often when third culture kids (TCKs) want to return to the culture where they grew up—it is home to them! Of course, their parents (and perhaps other relatives) are often still there and are likely to be in leadership roles since they are more mature and have had more experience there than most others on the field. When the TCKs arrive, they often find that being a missionary on that field is quite different from being a TCK. Many of them are rather disappointed.

Their parents may then favor them in attempt to make the experience better for their TCKs.

Is it really nepotism?

For it to actually be nepotism, the larger house or the position must be based on the person being a relative rather than based on other factors. Both Old and New Testaments forbid such favoritism.

- Do not show partiality to the poor or favoritism to the great, but judge your neighbor fairly (Leviticus 19:15).
- To show partiality in judging is not good (Proverbs 24:23).
- Keep these instructions without partiality and do nothing out of favoritism (1 Timothy 5:21).
- My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don't show favoritism (James 2:1).

Persons in authority making the decisions must be aware of temptation toward nepotism and make sure that decisions are for the good of all involved and are based on objective factors. They also must be aware of their own tendency to rationalize favoritism as being for the good of all when it is really based on what is good for their own relatives.

Other missionaries with less power must be aware of their own tendencies to take things personally and believe that nepotism is involved when it really is not.

Is it only perceived as nepotism?

Giving a family a larger house with a pool so that others will not have to move is not nepotism. It is a matter of trying to help by causing as little disruption in people's lives as possible.

Nepotism is not involved in hiring family members who are the persons with the best qualifications, even if they are family members. If family members are excluded from the pool of applicants, one may be excluding the people best qualified for the job, and people often know more about their relatives' talents than others know.

However, everyone must realize that it is best to avoid even the appearance of evil. What people perceive becomes the "reality" to which they react. If the situation leads to low morale, low productivity, or a seeming lack of integrity, it should be evaluated for its effects.

What is the solution?

This is a very difficult problem because we want to avoid favoritism toward family members on the one hand and discrimination against family members on the other. About 40% of the states in the USA have nepotism laws against hiring people for state positions. The other 60% do not have such laws because they want to avoid discrimination.

Some corporations, educational institutions, and agencies have nepotism rules, but others do not. Treating people fairly is difficult when those making the decisions are obviously biased. Walking the fine line between favoritism and discrimination is never easy, but here are some suggestions.

- The best "solution" is to not be in a position where nepotism can occur. That is, do not serve where you are supervising a family member or one is supervising you. However, since that is not always possible, the following may help.
- Acknowledge to yourself that nepotism does happen and that you could be guilty of it yourself. It is only "natural" for people to want the best for their own family members.
- Bring up to the group the possibility of nepotism happening. This brings it out into the open where it can be discussed by everyone.
- Talk with people on all sides of the question. Tell them that you want to be fair, guilty neither of favoritism toward family members nor of discriminating against them. Ask if they think you are doing either.
- Treat everyone applying exactly the same. Openly announce that positions, housing, and so forth are available and ask people to apply for them.

- Leave a paper trail. When you communicate via email or other written announcements, you have everything in writing. Follow up each oral communication (personal meeting, telephone or skype conversation) with a written summary.
- Get the opinion of a person not involved, someone outside your agency if possible. That way you have the unbiased judgments of an objective individual.

These may not prevent accusations of nepotism, but at least you have a record of your attempts to avoid it.

64

...about Rumors

More than a century ago Louis Stern conducted an experiment on rumors in which a “chain” of people passed a story from “mouth to ear” without repeating or explaining anything. He found that the story was shortened and changed as it passed through the chain.

This experiment became a parlor game in which people often purposely changed things to make it humorous. However, the story changes even if people really try to pass it on accurately. To see for yourself ask four or five people to pass the following paragraph to one another.

“Pablo woke with a start. It was 7:27AM, barely time for him to get through Madrid and catch his flight. He quickly tossed things into his backpack carryon and barely made it to the gate on time. Reaching into his backpack about three hours into his flight to New York while sitting near the rear of the 747, Pablo discovered the souvenir foot-long “sword” he had purchased in Toledo. How had it ever cleared security in Madrid? As soon as he landed at JFK, he found a trash can and discretely discarded it.”

If a story of less than 100 words can be changed by passing through so few people, imagine what changes occur as longer stories are passed through many people. This is one way stories become rumors. Such rumors about missionaries may occur with devastating effects.

What are rumors?

Rumors are unverified information from an unknown source. This information may have been started intentionally or unintentionally, and it may be true or false or a mixture of both. When you hear someone begin with “I heard that...” or “They say that...” a rumor is likely to follow. Rumors often go by other names, such as the following.

- News, beginning with, “I learned some news today....”
- Hearsay, beginning with, “I heard that...”
- Gossip, beginning with “Have you heard...?”
- Grapevine, beginning with, “I heard someone in the other office say that....”
- Urban legends “I found this all over the Internet....”
- Prayer requests, beginning with “I don’t want to mention any names but...”

What can rumors do?

Rumors can have positive or negative effects in many areas. They are used to win elections or to cause others to lose elections. They are used to help pass legislation or to help defeat legislation. However, missionaries are most concerned about certain negative effects.

- They may damage a cause. For example, rumors about spying may thwart efforts by an NGO bringing in relief supplies.
- They may hurt a ministry. For example, rumors about heretical theology may end the effectiveness of a church.
- They may destroy a reputation. For example, someone accused of sexual misconduct may lose his or her position in an organization serving others.

Even when malicious rumors are intentionally started, are totally false, and the ones who began them confess what they did, the rumors may continue to hamper a ministry so much that the innocent persons have to leave the host country or quit their ministry.

What does the Bible say about rumors?

Of course, in the Old Testament the Ten Commandments forbid giving false testimony about people (Exodus 20:16). At the end of the New Testament liars are condemned to a lake of fire (Revelation 21:8).

When paid to do so by the chief priests and elders, the guards at the tomb spread rumors about Jesus and his disciples. Those rumors were still circulating years later (Matthew 28:11-15).

People in many places spread rumors of various kinds about Paul, early missionary.

- Antioch (Pisidian): They “talked abusively against” him (Acts 13:45).
- Iconium: They “poisoned their minds” (Acts 14:2).
- Philippi: They said Paul was “advocating customs unlawful for us” (Acts 16:21).
- Thessalonica: They said that Paul had “caused trouble all over the world” and was “defying Caesar’s decrees” (Acts 17:6-7).
- Berea: They were “agitating the crowds” (Acts 17:13).

Rumors about missionaries were obviously common in Bible times. While preaching in Galilee, Jesus also said that people would have to give account for every careless (idle, thoughtless) word they had spoken (Matthew 12:36). Before passing on hearsay, missionaries must check its truthfulness.

How do rumors spread?

Louis Stern originally defined rumors as passing from “mouth to ear.” However, inventions near the end of the twentieth century increased the ways rumors can spread. Here are some of the more recent ones.

- Voicemail. The telephone was available when Stern did his experiment, but it was still one person talking directly with another. With voicemail, people can leave rumors for others to hear later in time.

- **Email.** Email allows people to spread rumors to dozens or thousands of others with a click of the mouse. They can simply forward the original or add comments of their own.
- **Websites.** Anyone with a computer, Internet access, and a few dollars can develop their own website on which they can post nearly anything they want. They can leave rumors for someone to find.
- **Social Networks.** Millions of people belong to social networks such as Facebook and Twitter. Though these networks rumors can spread to millions of people worldwide in hours.

Once a rumor enters this digital world it seems to take on a life of its own and become an “urban legend.” This does not mean that it originated in an urban area but is just the label given to unverified stories from unknown sources that circulate widely, often digitally.

Even after such a rumor is clearly identified as false, it tends to resurface months or years later, often in a slightly modified form. Once it has been digitized, it may turn up over and over.

What do you do when you hear a rumor?

The most important thing to do is not to pass it on. Avoid becoming part of the “chain” that keeps the rumor alive if tempted to pass it along. Sometimes the email comes with instructions to forward it to “everyone you know” along with an implied threat that if you do not do so something terrible will happen. Do not be misled—don’t forward it.

If you are unsure and want to check out the facts, www.snopes.com is the best Internet reference source for determining the truthfulness of urban legends, folklore, myths, rumors, and misinformation. When you find out the truth, you may want to let the person who sent you the rumor know what those facts are—along with a gentle reminder to check such things before sending them along.

If you find out that the rumor is true, certainly pray for the person or persons involved.

If you cannot verify either the truth or falsity of the information, you can ask the person. Of course, do it in a non-condemning way, noting that you do not think it is true. That person may not even know what is circulating about him or her. If so, they will most likely be thankful that you told them. Also offer to help in any way that you can.

What can you do if you are the victim of a rumor?

First, pray and ask God for his protection from the falsehood and ask for his guidance as you decide how to act. Just as you would pray for someone else, pray for yourself. Also talk with trusted friends and ask for their prayers as well.

It would be nice if there were “12 easy steps to squelching rumors,” but such is not the case. Note how Paul responded to each of the situations he faced.

- **Antioch (Pisidian):** Paul and Barnabas “answered them boldly.” (Acts 13:46).
- **Iconium:** Paul and Barnabas “spent considerable time there, speaking boldly” (Acts 14:3).
- **Philippi:** After being beaten and arrested, Paul and Silas prayed to God and sang (Acts 16:25).
- **Thessalonica:** Jason and others posted bond for Paul and Silas and sent them off (Acts 17:9-10).
- **Berea:** The brothers immediately sent Paul to the coast where he was escorted to his next destination (Acts 17:14-15).

Note that sometimes Paul spoke boldly, at other times he left, and at still other times he prayed and sang to God. There is no one correct way to cope with being the victim.

However, also note that Paul never responded alone. In each case he had friends who were there to help and advise him. Having the support and counsel of other like-minded people is probably one of the best things a missionary can do.

Finally, something you can do today that Paul could not do is send the truth to everyone you know who got the misinformation. Just as malicious rumors can spread quickly, so can the truth. If the

rumors were partly true, and you did something wrong, come clean. If it is true, don't deny or admit only part.

65

...about Groupthink

Suppose this happened to a missionary. After the fourth meeting about a new project which the long-time field director proposed and strongly supported, Pat was still troubled by misgivings. When she considered the cost of the project and the condition of the economy, proceeding with the project just did not seem wise. When another first term missionary began to raise questions, a veteran missionary quickly accused her of having too little faith. Certainly the project would help people, and it could be God's will, so Pat voted for it along with the others, but she still felt uneasy.

Later, after the project was abandoned and their agency had lost many thousands of dollars, Pat and several of the others who had voted for it talked about how they were like the man who began the tower but could not finish it (Luke 14:28-30). As they talked, they asked themselves, "How could we all have voted for it? It is so obvious now that it would not succeed." What happened to them was groupthink.

What is groupthink?

Irving Janis, the first person to study it in detail, defined groupthink as the kind of thinking people do when they are committed to a cohesive group and their striving for unanimity overcomes their ability to be realistic about which action to take. Individual uniqueness, creativity, and independent thinking are left behind in

protecting the cohesiveness of the group. People do not want to appear foolish or to upset the group so they set their doubts aside and make irrational decisions.

Janis studied American foreign policy disasters such as Pearl Harbor in 1941 and the Bay of Pigs fiasco in 1961. Most missionaries today remember the American government's decision to attack Iraq in 2003 to destroy the weapons of mass destruction although many USA citizens and most of the rest of the world did not think it was wise. Groupthink is not only something that politicians may do, but also it is something missionaries may do.

Did groupthink happen in the Bible?

We do not have enough details to be sure but groupthink appears to have happened shortly after King Solomon died. His son, Rehoboam, became king and soon asked Solomon's advisors about how to respond to a difficult situation. Rehoboam rejected their good advice to serve the people, and then he consulted some young men with whom he had grown up. These young men gave him bad advice to treat the people harshly. He did so, lost many of his subjects, and barely escaped alive to Jerusalem (1 Kings 12:8-20).

Conditions leading to groupthink

Though nothing has been proven to cause groupthink, several conditions may make groupthink more likely. Here are several of these conditions relevant to missionaries on the field.

- Highly cohesive group. Missionaries value the closeness of their group because there are few people nearby with whom they can share deeply.
- Insulation of the group. Missionaries have few people to talk with because they are far from their passport countries.
- Directive leadership. Field directors may tell missionaries what they would like to see done rather than asking what should be done.

- Homogenous group. The selection process in choosing missionaries often results in people with similar values, ways of thinking, education, and so forth.
- External threats. Missionaries often live under difficult situations with political, safety, and health threats surrounding them.
- Difficult decisions. Differences with values in the host culture may make "simple" decisions very difficult.

Symptoms of groupthink

Some of the symptoms indicating that groupthink is in progress follow. Beware if you notice any of them as your group meets.

- Illusion of invulnerability, such as "This can't fail because God is on our side."
- Collective rationalization of warnings that challenge assumptions. For example, if a secular consultant says that money will not come in for the project, group members agree that she just does not understand faith promises.
- Unquestioned belief in the morality of the group, such as "Because we are God's children, what we are doing must be an ethical or good thing to do."
- Stereotyping people outside the group as weak, biased, stupid, or even evil. For example, nationals opposed to building a church in their neighborhood may be characterized as under demonic influence.
- Pressure on dissenting group members to conform by suggesting they lack faith if they do not support the decision.
- Illusion of unanimity among group members because the silence of others is taken as agreement even though most of the committee may think the idea is doomed to failure.
- Self-censorship in which members do not express doubts because of the apparent consensus among other group members. Because it looks like the whole field committee agrees, no one is willing to look like a Doubting Thomas.

- Self-appointed “mindguards” who shield the group from problematic information. Committee members who are in favor of the project may take it upon themselves to see that conflicting financial reports are suppressed or taking aside any missionary who expresses doubts and pleading for unity behind the field director’s project.

Results of groupthink

Consensus-driven decisions lead to the following types of problems.

- The group does not completely study what needs to be accomplished. They begin planning the building before exploring whether or not it really needs to be built.
- The group does not explore all available alternative actions. Perhaps the agency could afford to rent or buy an existing building rather than building a new one.
- The group does not thoroughly study the risks of the preferred choice. Will the project be seen by supporters as low priority, too ostentatious, or a waste of money?
- The group selectively looks for confirming information. Committee members do not take time to ferret out facts that indicate it is a poor choice.
- The group does not formulate any contingency plan, Plan B. They are so sure they are right that they give no thought to what they might do if Plan A fails.

Preventing groupthink

Groupthink may be less likely if some of the following suggestions are followed.

- Leaders do not express their opinions or preferences when assigning the task.
- Leaders encourage each group member to express objections and doubts when the group meets.

- Members of the group routinely discuss plans or progress with trusted persons outside the group, such as nationals or those in other agencies.
- Outside experts should be invited to meetings on a staggered basis and encouraged to challenge views expressed.
- At each meeting a different member of the group should be the “Devil’s advocate” assigned to point out possible flaws and suggest alternatives.
- Before final approval at least one meeting should be devoted to consider all warning signals members can think of.

Of course, in avoiding groupthink, people must not go to the opposite extreme and be so cautious that they get caught in gridlock and do not approve any solution.

Differences between unity of the Spirit and the unanimity of groupthink

Finally, the unanimity of groupthink must not be confused with the “unity of the Spirit” described in Ephesians 4:3. The unanimity of groupthink comes from a set of assumptions that must not be questioned. Unity of the Spirit comes from a Christian set of assumptions and a common purpose of being united with Christ (Ephesians 2:1-5).

After the first term of Christian missionary service, a problem surfaced which illustrates the difference between the unity of the Spirit and the unanimity of groupthink. When they reached the church in Jerusalem, Paul and Barnabas met with the apostles, elders, and the church. They reported the results of their service, and some of the believers present stood up and said that the converts had to be circumcised and obey Moses’ law. Then the apostles and elders met to consider this (Acts 15).

- There was much discussion (v. 7).
- Peter, not the leader of this group but someone with previous experience with this issue, addressed the group (v. 7).
- Barnabas and Paul reported what God had done among the Gentiles (v. 12).

- The group became silent as they listened to this report (v. 12).
- Only when they finished did James (leader of the group) give his opinion on what should be done (vv. 13-21).
- To implement their action we read that the apostles and elders, with the whole church decided..." (v. 22), and they wrote in their letter, "So we all agreed to..." (v. 25).

This was unity in the Spirit, quite different from the unanimity of groupthink. The leader did not express his opinion at the beginning; people from both sides of the issue spoke; people were quiet as they listened; there was much discussion; in the end a decision was reached that the Gentiles involved "read it and were glad for its encouraging message." Missionaries must be careful to distinguish between the unity of the Spirit and groupthink.

Part 6.

Caring for Missionaries

Half a century ago people did not give consideration to caring for missionaries, but during the last quarter of a century many agencies have become interested in what has come to be called "member care." Today many agencies have member care departments and conferences are held on the topic. The "member care" chapter describes such care. In this area, questions often rise about psychological testing and about counseling, so chapters are included on each of these as well.

66

...about Member Care

You keep hearing about member care, but wonder about it. You are doing all right and wonder why anyone would need help. What is member care anyway? Since God cares for them, why would missionaries need member care from other people? If missionaries did need it, who would give it to them? How would missionaries go about getting such care, if they ever did need it? Let us consider some of these questions about member care.

What is member care?

Many words can be used to describe what takes place in member care. Some of those words are friendship, encouragement, affirmation, help, and fellowship as well as sharing, communicating, visiting, guiding, comforting, counseling and debriefing. All of these, and more, are facets of member care given by someone who understands the special needs of missionaries.

Of course, all Christians have the care given by the Holy Spirit, the one whom Jesus promised in John 14-16. Translated “comforter,” “counselor,” or “advocate,” the Greek word (paraclete) literally means one called or sent for to assist another, someone who has been invited to stand by our side.

In addition to the Holy Spirit, God often uses other people to come alongside and help us, whether we are missionaries or in other vocations. Most people in your passport country have others they can

call on for help, whether pastor, counselor, or friends in a small group—such as a Bible study group. Among missionaries who are members of some mission agency or church, the term used for this process of having someone come alongside to offer help is “member care.” This may be something as routine as a regularly scheduled visit from a pastor asking, “How are you doing?” Or it may be as rare as a psychologist rushing to get to you within a couple days for a trauma debriefing to help prevent post-traumatic stress disorder.

Who needs member care?

In modern individualistic western cultures where people learn to “make it on their own,” even Christians may believe that they do not need help from anyone except God. They may believe that asking for help is a sign of immaturity or weakness, a lack of faith or spirituality, or perhaps a symptom of illness—either mental or physical.

At the training sessions during the orientation of his twelve disciples Jesus told them where to go, what to take, what to do, and how to deal with conflict. He was not kidding when he went on to tell them to be on their guard because he was sending them out like sheep among wolves (Matthew 10). Today as you face the wolves of missionary life whether they are malaria, dengue fever, parasites, depression, anxiety, conflict, burnout, grief, guilt, temptations, assault, the violent death of a colleague, or demonic forces, you may need someone to come and stand by your side.

At the similar orientation session for the seventy-two others, Jesus sent them out in twos (Luke 10). No one went alone. First Church in Antioch commissioned Paul and Barnabas to leave on their first term (the first missionaries), and as they left, John went with them as well (Acts 13). When Paul and Barnabas could not agree on who should go along with them on their second term, they parted company and went out as two missionary teams of two each (Acts 15). There were no “Lone Rangers” (even the Lone Ranger had Tonto, his national companion). Instead of being a sign of weakness,

a lack of faith, or a symptom of illness, asking someone for help is a sign of normality, reality, and health.

Everyone seems to recognize that lone missionaries in frontier work need member care, but so do administrators in the home office. Even people in the secular world know that it is “lonely at the top.” Though surrounded by people, chief administrators may feel very alone and need someone to come alongside.

In every war there are many support staff for every soldier on the front lines. When soldiers come back from the front, they are expected and allowed to report that the battle was terrible, that they were anxious, discouraged, and that the conflict was awful. Some say, “War is hell.” Missionaries are on the frontline of a spiritual war between the powers of good and evil, and their battles are even worse. They need even more support staff, more member care during which they can share their inner battles, because they are literally in a war with the forces of hell.

Who gives member care?

Of course, anyone who cares can give member care. It may be a high school friend, a distant relative, a retired neighbor from your childhood, or anyone else. However, most often member care comes from four major sources.

- **Your Sending Church.** Ideally much member care comes from your home church. Members can send letters, call you by telephone, send packages of special things you miss, communicate with you by e-mail, and come visit you. Unfortunately, in these days of much education (going to college and then to seminary) missionaries often lose close connections with their home churches. They may have not really bonded with the last church attended before going overseas so that the churches commissioning them may not really feel like their sending church. Thus they may receive little member care.

Likewise, your support may be in rather small amounts from many churches or many individuals. Since no church really feels like you are their missionary, you may receive little member care from

anyone. When a pastor leaves a church, the new pastor may not know you well and may give you little member care.

- **Other Missionaries.** The people most likely to deeply understand what you are going through and be able to empathize with you are other missionaries. The missionaries you work with are the ones best able to come alongside, but if you share too much, that may affect your working relationships. You may be able to form a bond with missionaries from other agencies in the area, if there are others nearby.
- **Your Agency.** Many medium-size and large agencies now have people whose assignment is to give member care. These may be pastors, veteran missionaries, counselors, and so forth. They may be at centers in different parts of the world, or they may travel from country to country giving care to missionaries in that agency.
- **Member Care Specialists.** At times you may rather talk with someone completely outside your agency. You may have personal problems that you do not want to share with anyone in the agency or for which you think there is no help in the agency. Pastors, counselors, social workers, psychologists, and psychiatrists who specialize in missionary care are available to come alongside and help.

How do I get member care?

Ask for it. Tell people when you need help. Find someone you can ask for help when you face the wolves of missionary life.

- **Your Sending Church.** If you do not feel like you have a sending church, ask a church to play that role for you. Tell them you want to be “their missionary,” and ask for care from them. You may even want a coalition of churches geographically near each other to be your “sending church” and furlough in their area. Tell them that re-entry and furlough are difficult, and you want their help especially during that time. Tell them that you need letters and phone calls while on the field; then tell them when you are getting too much e-mail so that they will not expect immediate, personal replies.

- Other Missionaries. Form support groups with others on your field in your agency or nearby. Meet regularly for Bible study, prayer, and general care for each other. Form accountability relationships with two or three others.
- Your Agency. Tell your administrators when you need care. Ask them to find someone to give you regular pastoral care if they do not already have someone playing that role.
- Member Care Specialists. Some organizations specialize in supplying on-field care for missionaries. This may involve a cost, or the care may be free. Other organizations provide care in sending countries, places where you can temporarily withdraw from the battle and receive help from mental health professionals.

The order of Stephanas

The missionary, Paul, wrote to the Corinthians about missionary care he received. The household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia, and Paul noted that they had “devoted themselves to the service of the saints” (1 Corinthians 16:15). Paul said that he was glad when Stephanas, Fortunatas, and Achaius arrived because they brought just what was lacking. He wrote, “They refreshed my spirit.” That is just what people do for missionaries today when they provide member care—they bring what is lacking and refresh spirits.

People supplying member care do not need to be mental health professionals to be of great help. Literally hundreds of studies have shown that paraprofessionals (people who have received some basic training in the rudiments of counseling) can be just as effective in helping others as are those who are licensed or certified by some state board or agency.

Thus, sensitive people from your sending church, empathetic colleagues on your field, understanding administrators in your agency, or professionally trained member care specialists can be of great help as you face the wolves among whom God has sent you.

67

...about 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? Let us consider some of these questions.

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.

Isn't a call enough?

If God has called a person to a missionary task, are psychological tests made by humans necessary? If the call is really

from God, such tests may not be necessary, but “calls” may come from a variety of sources. Some people label as a call their desire for travel; others interpret their search for adventure and excitement as a “call;” still others interpret encouragement from family or friends as indicating a call.

Although most “calls” are what they seem to be, some may 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 Barnabus and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” After further prayer and fasting by the church, Paul and Barnabus were commissioned and sent on their mission. The call was to the church as well as to the individuals.

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 a home assignment.
- **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.

68

...about Counseling

You have been struggling with a problem for some time and cannot seem to solve it. You have thought about going to someone for counseling, but you have reservations. Does that mean there is something wrong with you? What does the Bible say? To whom do you go? Will what you say get back to headquarters? Who will pay? Let us consider some of these questions.

Does needing counseling mean that something is wrong with me?

In our individualistic culture, some people believe that if you need help solving a problem, then you must be weak, not spiritual enough, or even mentally ill. That is not the case. We all need help from others just to know how to solve some of the normal problems that are a part of life. How should I discipline my children? What is my responsibility to my aging parents? How can I solve this conflict with my spouse?

A counselor will not make the decision for you, but will help you explore your dilemma to make the decision. He or she may provide information, suggest action you can take, explore the implications of the various options you have, and so forth.

What does the Bible say about counseling?

The Bible makes it clear that you may receive good or bad counsel, and it is up to you to seek out good counsel. Christ was called the “Wonderful Counselor” (Isaiah 9). As Jesus was leaving he promised “another Counselor” would come to be with us forever, the Holy Spirit (John 14-16). This other comforter, the “Paraclete” is “one called or sent for to assist another.” A counselor is basically a helper, one to come alongside in time of need. We are repeatedly urged to seek counsel from the Lord.

In addition, we are told to have many counselors at the human level. Even Solomon with all his wisdom often advised having counselors, many counselors (Proverbs 11:14, 12:15, 13:10, 15:22, 20:18, 24:6). Of course, we are also warned not to take the counsel of the wicked.

What kind of counselor should I see?

There are more than half a dozen different types of people you may choose. All will counsel you, but various ones have different “tools” they are more likely to use.

- Wise lay person. You may simply want to talk with someone you believe has experienced much in life and is very wise. This person is likely to give advice and urge you to take a particular course of action.
- Pastor/pastoral counselor. People in this role are likely to look for spiritual problems, and are more likely to pray with you, lay hands on you, anoint you with oil, or apply scripture to your situation.
- Clinical psychologist /counseling psychologist / counselor. These individuals are most likely to talk with you and help to detect problems in your thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.
- Clinical social worker. This individual is likely to look at your relationships with others as a source of your problem.
- Psychiatrist. This is a person trained as a physician and is more likely to look for a physical basis for your problem, to give you medication to improve your thinking or emotional balance.

Ideally all of these individuals should look at all causes, spiritual, psychological, social, and physical, but each has his or her emphasis. You may even want to talk to two at the same time, telling each that you are seeing another. Find someone who is competent, in whom you have confidence, and to whom you can relate.

If the person you first talk with is unable to help, feel free to see someone else. Of course, continue with the first person long enough to find out whether or not the treatment works. All approaches may take several sessions for noticeable improvement to occur.

Should I see someone inside or outside the mission?

This is up to you. The important thing is to find a competent person to whom you can relate, and these kinds of people are found both within mission organizations and outside them. It is a matter of personal preference, but find someone who really listens—to be heard often means to be healed.

One study found that a person's missionary status influenced whether counsel was preferred from within or outside the organization. Missionaries in candidacy or prefield orientation tended to prefer counsel from someone within the organization. Missionaries who had experienced significant difficulties on the field preferred counsel from someone not affiliated with the mission.

Should I see a professional?

Again, this is up to you. The idea that persons are qualified to give counsel only because of their education and credentials from a governmental agency is a modern Western one. For most of history, people simply sought counsel from those they perceived as wise.

Today agencies license or certify professionals who have met specified educational standards and have had a minimum of supervised experience. These credentials assure you that the person has met the criteria of some board of the state.

Dozens of studies have been done comparing professional and paraprofessional helpers, and the research has usually not found significant differences in the outcome of the two. The paraprofessionals, people with some counseling training, were usually just as effective as the professionals in helping people resolve most problems.

Of course, if you are thinking about harming yourself, see a professional who can evaluate how likely you are to do so, and who can take effective steps to prevent harm.

When and where should I seek counsel?

The simple answer is the sooner the better right where you are. People tend to wait too long and think they have to go back "home."

- Before the problem arises. Many times you anticipate a problem arising. Learn about raising children before you have them. Prevention is always better than restoration!
- As soon as the problem arises. You may not have seen the problem coming, but as soon as you see you have a problem, look for help. This is especially important if trauma is involved. Then you need to talk with a competent person within 36-72 hours of the trauma.
- After the fact. If you were unable to find counsel before or during the crisis, talk with someone about it when you get the chance; do not let it build inside you. Paul was grateful when Stephanas, devoted to the service of the saints, visited him and "refreshed my spirit" (1 Corinthians 16).

Will what I say be kept confidential?

That is something you want to establish before you begin talking about your issue. This is usually done at the first session when you will be given an informed consent statement if you see a professional. This statement should have in writing the procedures that will be followed while you are seeing the professional, including the confidentiality policy.

In most states in the USA professionals are legally required to break confidentiality if harm is involved or if ordered to in a court of law, such as in a custody dispute for children.

Most informed consent statements will have the following limitations on confidentiality:

- If you say you intend to harm yourself, the counselor will take whatever steps are necessary to prevent that, including telling others.
- If you say you intend to harm someone else, the counselor will inform the intended victim and authorities where you live and where the intended victim lives.
- If you report abuse of some helpless person, such as a child, or aging adult, the counselor will report that to protective services.
- If a judge compels a counselor to reveal something in court, most counselors will do so.

Of course, the informed consent statement may include other conditions as well, so read it carefully before signing it. The statement is meant to make it clear to all involved when confidence will be broken.

If someone else (insurance company, governmental agency) is paying for you to be counseled, they will at least be told that you are talking to the counselor, and most require some diagnosis as well. That becomes a part of your medical record.

Who will pay the bill?

Someone may volunteer to counsel you for free. If there is a charge, you can, of course, pay the bill yourself.

If you want a third party, such as an insurance company, to pay the bill, you will probably have to seek counsel from a competent professional, someone with professional credentials. Of course, you may request to see a Christian mental health professional if you wish. If your insurance company is paying, be sure to check what your co-payment is, how many sessions the insurance company allows, and specific referral procedures.

69

...about Danger and Risk

Don, Cynthia, and their three preschool and elementary children had been serving in Africa for three years. They had come to terms with the dangers related to malaria and cholera, but Ebola had just been confirmed in a village only a few kilometers from the city where they served. The risks related to Ebola are now much higher, and they now have to decide whether to move to a safer place or to stay and continue their ministry. Having three young children complicates their decision. Their agency told them they had the choice of staying or leaving.

Vern and Peggy were just finishing a summer of visiting family and fund raising in their passport country when conflict broke out in their host country, and the situation was approaching civil war. Their children were all in upper middle school or high school and attended boarding school in a stable country. Their host country had been quite safe with only a few travel alerts, but now there were travel warnings for much of the country, especially the city where they served. They felt needed so much there that they would like to return, but their children were afraid they would be killed. Their agency also left the decision up to them.

Most agencies have policies and/or recommendations for people serving with them. Sometimes those policies are firm and require missionaries to leave the country or not to go to places under specific dangers. However, those policies sometimes leave the final

decision up to the people involved, and “to go or not to go” becomes the question.

Where is danger?

Danger and risk are found everywhere. Thousands of people die every year from antibiotic resistant diseases they catch in hospitals in their passport countries. People are murdered each year on the streets of the cities in their passport countries. One concerned parent in the USA called a cross-cultural worker in Asia during the second week in September 2001, offering to fly the whole family back to the USA. The family declined, pointing out that they were not the ones under attack by terrorists.

Danger from disease, violence, tsunamis, weather, earthquakes, accidents, and so forth are found literally everywhere. The question is whether or not to go to places where known high risk dangers exist. Millions of people choose to live where these are likely to occur, and as a result thousands die each year. Other people get caught in such situations through no fault of their own.

Of course, when only adults are involved and they have the freedom and means to leave, few ethical questions are raised. However, when children are involved or people are forced into these situations, new issues rise. Let us consider some of the questions that arise, what people did in Bible times, and how to make such decisions today.

What does the Bible say?

The Bible is not silent about this situation of facing danger. Here are some things that Jesus said and some that Paul did.

When sending his disciples out Jesus gave them a long set of instructions (Matthew 10). First he told them where to go, what to do, what to take along, and how to find lodging. Then he told them what to expect and what to do when certain things occurred.

- Stand firm. He told them they would be handed over to local councils, flogged in synagogues, arrested, betrayed, and people

would hate them, “but he who stands firm to the end will be saved” (vs. 17-22).

- Flee to another place. He told them, “When persecuted in one place, flee to another” and that they would not go through all the cities of Israel (v.23).

He made it clear that at some times they would stay in the dangerous place where they would be arrested and beaten, and at other times they were to leave those dangerous places and go elsewhere.

The apostle Paul illustrated this in his ministry in the book of Acts.

- Fled to another place. Paul and Barnabas had a fruitful ministry in Iconium. However, when the Jews and the Gentiles plotted together to stone him, “they found out about it and fled to Lystra” (Acts 14:1-6).
- Stood firm. When Paul and Barnabas arrived at Caesarea, Paul was warned by a prophet that the Jews in Jerusalem would bind his hands and have him arrested. People listening begged Paul not to go, but he went anyway (Acts 21:7-14.) He was arrested in Jerusalem.

Note that one time Paul fled, and at another time, he stood firm even though he was arrested.

A theology of risk?

In addition to passages of scripture such as those above, missionaries need to develop their own “theology of risk.” This is really not as scholarly as it sounds because all it means is for missionaries to put in words and internalize what they believe about God and how that applies to the risks they are facing. Some of the first ones to do that were Evan and Jewel Evans who served with their four daughters in Sub-Saharan Africa for decades. As their world unraveled, the family decided that they needed such a theology. They found that God promised them two things.

- God would be with them.
- God’s grace was sufficient for anything they would face.

They finally took a vote whether to stay or not, and everyone in the family felt that God was not finished with them there, so they would remain in their adopted land regardless of the cost (“Coping with risk: working in an uncertain world, *Interact*, Winter, 2005).

Missionaries wanting a five-page Bible study, “Toward a theology of risk” can get it by going to the SIM website at <http://www.thrive.sim.org/> and searching for “risk.”

Those who would like to see a sample theology of risk and read one for short-termers can find it at <http://www.baptistsonmission.org/News/A-Theology-of-Risk-for-NCBM>.

Apparently no books have been published about developing a theology of risk, but missionaries can develop one by writing down what they believe about God and reading Matthew 10, Matthew 24, John 16, and 2 Corinthians 11, and determining how their beliefs about God apply to the situations Jesus told his followers they would face, and those Paul actually faced.

How does one decide?

The basic decision rule is that people who do not want to enter or stay in the danger situation should not be forced, pressured, or shamed into doing so. Anyone who wants to be out of it should be allowed to go or stay out.

Policies or guidelines of the agency should be followed. When missionaries join an agency, they agree to live by those documents whether they agree with them or not. If the agency tells them to evacuate, members are bound to follow the policy even if they want to stay. Of course, the agency may make an exception if it wishes to do so.

Adult individuals or couples can make their decisions as individuals or as couples. They can act as their theology of risk determines, as long as it is within their agency’s guidelines. Of course, when small children who do not understand what is going on are involved, their parents are the ones to make the judgments on whether or not they enter or remain in the danger area (if policy

permits this). Agency policies may dictate that children and their mothers evacuate or stay out.

Families with older children and adolescents should include those offspring in the decision even if not required to do so. Everyone should be involved in the discussion and the “vote.” This is not just a majority vote. Like with the Evans family mentioned above, it should be a unanimous vote. Requiring anyone to remain in such a situation is likely to result in serious consequences and should rarely be done.

The experts in this area are Crisis Consulting International at <http://www.cricon.org>. There is little information for individuals on the website, but it does describe their excellent training and seminars.

Does God always protect?

God does not promise that his people will never have persecution or die prematurely. In fact, he is quite clear that some of them will experience persecution and die. What he does promise is that he will go with them through it all and that his grace will be sufficient. Hebrews 11 lists some heroes of the faith who “conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised” (v. 33). However, it ends by saying that others were tortured, jeered, flogged, chained, imprisoned, stoned, sawed in two, and killed with swords (vv. 35-38).

On the one hand the Evans family had their theology of risk tested when seven armed robbers forced their way into their walled campus and went from house to house robbing and beating families and even killing an African worker. They were also caught in the crossfire between government troops and rebels trying to overthrow the government, but they survived. When Jewel asked their 15-year-old daughter if she thought they made a mistake when they decided to stay, she replied that she would not even consider leaving after that happened because they had counted the cost and made the commitment to stay.

On the other hand, Nate Saint and the four others who were killed by the Auca Indians in Ecuador in the 1950s did not survive.

Nate was criticized by some for not trusting the Lord when he had his wife Marj note his position every five minutes when he was flying. Nate wrote, “I wouldn’t be here if I weren’t trusting the Lord...I’m concerned about safety, but I don’t let it keep me from getting on with God’s business. Every time I take off, I am ready to deliver up the life I owe to God. I feel that we should be quick to take advantage of every possible improvement in carrying out the job before us” (*Through Gates of Splendor*, 1981, p. 48).

70

...about 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.

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.

71

... about Uncompleted Transitions

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.

A Transition Model

An intuitive model of what happens between people being fully involved in one culture and their being fully involved in another is that there are three stages.

- Leaving. The leaving stage begins when people first seriously consider leaving where they are, and it ends when they actually

walk out the door on their way. Leaving often takes several months and sometimes years.

- **In Transit.** The transit stage of reentry begins when they leave their houses in one culture, and it ends when they unpack their minds, not just their suitcases, in the new culture. It may last only a few hours or days, but it may also last several weeks or even longer.
- **Entering.** The entering stage begins when their minds are unpacked, and it lasts until they are fully involved again in the new culture. Just crossing the border into a different country does not mean that they are integrated into that culture. It takes time and energy to fully become part of the culture and become a part of social groups there whether it is moving to a host country or returning to a passport country. This often takes a full calendar year or even longer.

Transitions are completed only if people have time to complete the entering stage and fully become a part of their host culture when they go or fully become a part of their passport culture when they return.

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.

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Part 7. Ending Well

This book began with the basics: maintaining health, coping with stress, living in a time-oriented culture, having realistic expectations, saying goodbye, and reentering your host culture. Those activities are so basic that they are relevant as you end your missionary career. In addition, you will continue to face the everyday challenges as well as challenges that may become problems.

However, relationships with the family members and with others tend to change. As you near retirement in a day when many people live far into their eighties and nineties, you may face the question of what to do about aging parents as well as your own retirement. As you become older, look for things indicating whether you are becoming better or becoming bitter. Remember that you have the choice of which you become. May you age gracefully and with joy!

... about 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 do 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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... about 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 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 face 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. We could list six possible phases.

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.

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. 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 will probably 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:

- Someone move in with the parent.
- The parent move in with the family of one of the children.
- A home in a retirement village where people are on call to give assistance.
- 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.
- 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.

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...about 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.

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."

Recommended Readings

The following books contain information expanding on material in each of the major parts of this book. All of these books are in print, all cost less than \$25.00, and more than half of them cost less than \$15.00. If you cannot find them at a bookstore, you can purchase these books online at www.amazon.com and/or www.mti.org. You can also order from MTI by mail, by fax, or by phone. Many of the books are available at both Amazon and MTI so compare prices, shipping charges, etc. The prices given below are list prices, in some cases the discounts are significant, and shipping may be free if you buy enough books.

Part 1. Beginning with Basics

Honourably Wounded: Stress among Christian Workers. Marjorie Foyle, Evangelical Missions Information Service, Monarch Books, Grand Rapids MI, 2001 (ISBN 0-8254-6023-9) \$14.95; 14 chapters, 288 pages. Written by a missionary psychiatrist with a lifetime of missionary service in India, this book offers a broad overview of many topics gathered under the general topic of stress. Written for practical self-help, this is the best general book to buy if you can afford only one.

Re-Entry: Making the Transition from Missions to Life at Home. Peter Jordan, Youth With a Mission, Seattle, WA, 1992 (ISBN 0-927545-40-3) \$9.99; 8 chapters, 150 pages. A veteran missionary suggests some things you can do before you ever go into missions, others you can do as the time to return approaches, and still others you can do as you actually re-enter. This book is relevant for everyone from the short-term first timer to the veteran missionary.

The Art of Coming Home. Craig Storti. (2002). Intercultural Press, Yarmouth, ME. (ISBN 1-877864-47-1) \$19.95; 5 chapters, 203 pages. Written by a Peace Corps volunteer specializing in cross-cultural adjustment and repatriation, this book includes sections for the spouse and children as well as sections for exchange students, volunteers, military, and missionaries.

Homeward Bound: A Spouse's Guide to Repatriation. Robin Pascoe, Expatriate Press, North Vancouver, BC, Canada, 2000 (ISBN 0-9686760-0-6) \$16.95; 7 chapters, 192 pages, index. Although most of the examples are of women reentering with their husbands, the same issues arise if the husband has gone overseas to follow his wife in her career.

After the Boxes Are Unpacked: Moving on After Moving in. Susan Miller, Tyndale, Wheaton, IL 1995 (ISBN 1-56179-405-8) \$10.99; 19 chapters, 165 pages. Although this was written for women moving in our mobile society, it is applicable to returning missionary wives as well.

The Reentry Team: Caring for Your Returning Missionaries. Neal Pirolo, Emmaus Road International: San Diego, CA, 2000 (ISBN 1-800185-07-5) \$8.99; 10 chapters, 319 pages. Though written for people caring for missionaries, missionaries themselves would profit from reading it. The book contains many reentry stories written by missionaries as well as a solid Scriptural foundation and further resources.

Part 2. Everyday Challenges

Psychology of Missionary Adjustment. Marge Jones with E. Grant Jones, Logion Press, Springfield, MO, 1995 (ISBN 0-88243-321-0) \$12.95; 11 chapters, 173 pages, index. Although useful for missionaries at any stage in life because it covers mental health issues from call to retirement, it is probably most useful to relatively new missionaries. The author, a missionary for nearly four decades, notes that the book was written to help missionaries persevere through the second, third, fourth and even fifth terms.

Frontline Women: Negotiating Crosscultural Issues in Ministry. Marguerite G. Kraft (Ed.), William Carey Library, Pasadena, CA, 2003 (ISBN 0-87808-356-1) \$16.99; 12 chapters, 11 contributors, 225 pages, index. Written mostly by women for women, this book covers many women's issues including stress, roles, loneliness, life-style, self-image, marginality and the demonic. As noted in the forward, women need to read this book to be encouraged and men need to read it and wake up.

Boundaries: When to Say Yes, When to Say No, To Take Control of Your Life. Henry Cloud and John Townsend, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, MI, 1992 (ISBN 0-310-58590-2) \$14.99; 16 chapters, 304 pages, index. The title says it all, and you understand that if you are letting other people control your life.

Healing for Damaged Emotions. David A. Seamands, Chariot Victor Publishing, Wheaton, IL, 1991 (ISBN 0-89693-938-3) \$10.99; 12 chapters, 144 pages. Written by a missionary/pastor/ professor, this book looks at the effect of memories of events in the past that have never been faced and result in anger guilt, depression, inferiority and perfectionism. We can find freedom from this lingering emotional pain that continues to effect us.

Part 3. Challenges That May Become Serious Problems

Christian Counseling: A Comprehensive Guide (Rev. ed.). Gary R. Collins, Word Publishing, Dallas, TX, 1988 (ISBN 0-8499-3124-X) \$24.99; 38 chapters, 711 pages, index. Written by a prominent Christian psychologist to help Christian leaders in their counseling, it is a good source for anyone who wants a clearer understanding of human behavior and the biblical basis of counseling. The book covers personal, developmental, interpersonal, identity, family and other issues.

Part 4. Family and Sexuality

The New Dare to Discipline. James Dobson, Tyndale House, Wheaton, IL, 1992 (ISBN 0-8423-0506-8) \$12.99; 11 chapters, 277 pages. This is the classic book by the well known host of Focus on the Family. It has sold millions of copies and remains an excellent source of information about child rearing.

The Wounded Heart: Hope for Adult Victims of Childhood Sexual Abuse. Dan B. Allender, NavPress, Colorado Springs, CO, 1990 (ISBN 0-89109-289-7) \$16.00; 13 chapters, 301 pages. This book offers guidance in the middle of the confusion, rage and fear of those who have been sexually abused as children. Though you may not realize it, someone you know has been sexually abused, and this book will help.

Don't Pig Out on Junk Food: The MK's Guide to Survival in the U. S. Alma D. Gordon, Evangelical Missions Information Service, Wheaton, IL, 1993 (ISBN 0-9617751-1-4) \$12.95; 6 chapters, 160 pages, index. Written for MKs by a fourth-generation MK, this book offers helpful practical advice from MKs to MKs about all aspects of transition to the USA, from preparation to identity to relationships. Each chapter includes great illustrations, questions for reflection, and work sheets.

Third Culture Kids: The Experience of Growing Up among Worlds. David C. Pollock and Ruth E. Van Reken, Intercultural Press, Yarmouth, ME, 2001 (ISBN 1-877864-72-2) \$19.95; 18 chapters, 333 pages. Written by authors with many years of experience working with TCKs, this book not only reveals what TCKs are like, but goes on to devote 7 chapters telling how to maximize the benefits of being a TCK.

Between Worlds: Essays on Culture and Belonging. Marilyn R. Gardner, Doorlight Publications www.doorlightpubs.com. 2014 (ISBN 0-9838653-8-8) \$17.95; 7 chapters, 231 pages. Written by a TCK, a missionary, and a mother of 5 children born on three continents, this book is written from experience and the author expresses open and vulnerable. Excellent for TCKs trying to understand themselves.

Raising Global Nomads: Parenting in an On-Demand World. Robin Pascoe, Expatriate Press, Vancouver, BC, Canada. 2006 (ISBN 0-9686760-3-0) \$24.95; 10 chapters, 230 pages, appendix. Written by the mother of TCKs, this book is filled with personal experiences as well as much practical advice on living in other cultures. Much has changed in our world since 1993 when the author wrote her parents guide. This update considers implications for TCKs growing up outside their passport culture in this globalized, digitized, terrorized world.

When Abroad—Do as the Local Children Do: Ori's Guide for Young Expats. Hilly van Swol-Ulbrich, & Bettina Kaltenhauser. XPat Media, the Netherlands, 2002 (ISBN 90-5594-262-6) \$15.95; 9 chapters, 105 pages, information for parents. Written for children ages 8-12, this guide for living another culture follows Ori, a migrating bird, through transitions. In addition to activities and assignments, this book also has additional information on Ori's website to complete the interactive format of the book.

Families on the Move: Growing Up Overseas—and Loving It! Evangelical Missions Information Service, Monarch Books, Grand Rapids MI, 2001 (ISBN 0-8454-6018-2) \$10.99; 9 chapters, 189 pages. Written by a missionary, this gives readable practical advice on living abroad from the time they consider going to the time they return.

Fitted Pieces: A Guide for Parents Educating Children Overseas. Janet R. Blomberg and David F. Brooks, Share Education Services, St. Clair Shores, MI, 2001 (ISBN not available) \$22.50, 8 Chapters, 667 Pages. With 84 articles (50 from *Interact*) appearing in the eight chapters, this is without question the most comprehensive book available on the education of third culture kids. It is a valuable resource for people considering the education of their children overseas.

Part 5. Relationships with Others

Ministering Cross-Culturally: An Incarnational Model for Personal Relationships. Sherwood G. Lingenfelter & Marvin K. Mayers, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI, 1986 (ISBN 0-8010-5632-2) \$9.99; 9 chapters, 125 pages. Two missionary-professors developed this questionnaire/model that results in a personal profile on twelve basic values that often result in disagreements between people, even people from the same culture.

Caring Enough to Confront: How to Understand and Express Your Deepest Feelings Toward others (Rev. ed.). David Augsburger, Regal Books, Ventura, CA, 1981 (ISBN 0-8307-0733-6) \$12.99; 10 chapters, 143 pages. A professor of pastoral counseling shows you how to be a peacemaker by “care-fronting” someone with whom you have a conflict. It is effective when used with people from western cultures.

Cross-Cultural Conflict: Building Relationships for Effective Ministry. Duane Elmer, InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL, 1994 (ISBN 0-8308-1657-7) \$13,00; 12 chapters, 189 pages. A missionary-professor contrasts handling conflicts the American way with handling them in other cultures. This is useful for maintaining relationships with missionaries from other cultures as well as nationals to whom you are ministering.

Building Credible Multicultural Teams. Lianne Roembke. William Carey Library,, Pasadena, CA . 2000 (ISBN 0-87808-340-5) \$17.99; 7 chapters, 285 pages, index. Written by a missionary with more than 30 years experience, this book is theoretically sound as well as very practical. It is a valuable resource for anyone working on a multicultural team.

Part 6. Caring for Missionaries

Serving as Senders: How to Care for Your Missionaries While They Are Preparing to Go, While They Are on the Field, When They Return Home, Neal Pirolo, San Diego, CA, 1991 (ISBN 1-880185-00-8) \$7.95, 8 chapters, 207 pages. This book is for people in the local church. If your supporting churches ask what they can do to help, give them a copy of this.

Enhancing Missionary Vitality: Mental Health Professions Serving Global Mission. John R. Powell and Joyce M. Bowers. (Editors). Mission Training International, Palmer Lake, CO 2002 (ISBN 0-942726-03-0) \$24.95, 56 chapters, 499 pages, index. This book is written basically about North American missionaries by people who attend the annual Conference on Mental Health & Missions. Although written by and for mental health professionals, many of the chapters are of interest to missionaries themselves.

Doing Member Care Well: Perspectives and Practices from around the World. Kelly O'Donnell (Editor), William Carey Library, Pasadena, CA 2002 (ISBN 0-87808-446-0) \$24.99; 50 chapters, 566

pages, index. Written by authors from around the world, this book gives an introduction to member care context in the Part 1. Part 2 considers regional issues in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Arabic world. Part 3 considers many types of member care from caring for oneself to care from specialists.

Part 7. Ending Well

The *Joys of Successful Aging: Finishing with Grace*. George Sweeting, Northfield Publishing, Chicago, IL 2002 (ISBN 1-881273-13-X) \$16.99; 12 Chapters, 141 pages. This book is a short, easily read book with lots of humor, which itself is a necessary requisite for successful aging.

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.
- *Missionary Transitions* considers multiple changes that happen to missionaries from marriage, children, HMA, changing fields, and many others until retirement and death.
- *Memories and Musings about Missionary Member Care* presents situations experienced during 20 years of service plus suggestions to face them as well as the story of the missionarycare.com website.

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.