

On **mission**

CARING FOR THOSE WHO GO

Cook * Matchullis * Gilbertson * Jones * Suresh
Dicke * Lau * Brown * Enns * Wiebe



VOL. 4

Edited by Ronald Brown

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Preface

by Ronald Brown

The first three volumes in this ON MISSION series were “Stories of those who went,” which included thirty-six biographies of international workers. Most of those achieved two to three decades of ministry in their field of service. This begs the question, how can an international worker, despite facing so many obstacles living in another culture, being away from the comforts of a Canadian home, facing loneliness, suffering, and discouragement, working in another language, while also juggling the raising of children in a new setting continue in ministry for such a long period of time?

This is volume four in the ON MISSION series, and it seeks to pull back the curtain to show how there is a plethora of systems, policies, structures, and people in place who provide care, guidance, prayer and sustaining strength for those on the frontlines. This includes firstly the lengthy process of identifying and developing healthy workers and then, secondly, the maintaining and providing adequate care of workers while on assignment. They are not left alone.

The people of God, through their churches, sending agencies’ leaders, specialists, and member care providers all help to achieve the last phrase of the Great Commission where Jesus says, “...I’ll be with you as you do this, day after day after day right up to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20 MSG¹). The keeper side of God is very apparent through His people as His ambassadors take the good news of Jesus around the world to yet unreached peoples.

1. *The Message* (MSG): Copyright © 1993, 2002, 2018 by Eugene H. Peterson

Introduction: The Keeper Side of God

by Ronald Brown

Four armed men walked into an air-conditioned restaurant on a weekday afternoon. They told the European women enjoying an afternoon Coke on a humid West African day to get on the floor and remove their jewelry. One man walked around the group with a bag collecting watches, necklaces, earrings, and bracelets. As they were about to depart, one pointed his pistol at the American missionary on the floor, saying, "Come with us." She sat in the middle of the back seat of a Mercedes, fearing the worst. They were driving to the edge of the city; it was dusk. Suddenly, the car stopped, a back door opened, and a man said, "get out." They sped away into the darkness, leaving Amy standing on the side of the dirt road alone, frightened, wondering. An African woman walking by and witnessing everything pointed up the road and said, "the pastor's house is there."

A year later, I passed through a city in another country where Amy and her husband were then working, and I stopped in for a Coke. They had benefitted from the counsel of their mission leader and a member care provider to relocate and take on another assignment. When I asked Amy how she was doing, she replied, "I'm daily experiencing the keeper side of God." It was my first time hearing the phrase, and it stuck with me. In my daily Bible reading throughout the following year, I found myself highlighting every time I came across the word *keep*.

When we think about factors contributing to the resiliency of Christian workers, we begin to understand something of the relationship of the Creator with His creatures.

An aspect not fully developed is an element set in the context of God's omnipotence and having to do with His sustaining power. As Amy referred to it, it is "the keeper side of God." Other scriptural words would be guard, protect, and preserve.

In the story of God with His people in the Pentateuch, we can observe the keeper side of God in operation. Jacob, for example, is on the run. He fears his brother Esau because of a grudge and subsequent evil intent to kill (Genesis 27:41). He runs. During the night, as he sleeps, God speaks to Jacob in a dream. "**I am with you** and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you" (Genesis 28:15).

On awakening, Jacob realizes the “keeper God” is very present with him.

On another occasion, Moses received a mandate from God. He was nervous and doubtful about his being accepted by the authorities of the day. The keeper side of God became evident as God instructed Moses, “**I will be with you.** And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain” (Exodus 3:12).

The beautiful and oft-quoted priestly blessing has been a source of courage and comfort to many in the aftermath of traumatic times, “The Lord bless you and **keep you**; the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace” (Numbers 6:24-26).

Later, after years of wilderness wandering, and now under a new administration, the keeper side of God is evidenced with words to the new leader as a promise, “No one will be able to stand up against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, **so I will be with you**; I will never leave you nor forsake you . . . Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your **God will be with you wherever you go**” (Joshua 1:5, 9).

Much later in God’s story, when He began to send prophets to speak into the lives of His people, He again shows His keeper side to timid leaders: “So do not fear, **for I am with you**; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand” (Isaiah 41:10). In fact, He will even take Israel by the hand, sustaining her, so she will achieve His purposes and be a light to the nations (Isaiah 42:6).

Even later, the prophet Haggai is mobilizing the people of God, and they are challenged, “‘...**I am with you**,’ declares the Lord. ‘But now be strong, Zerubbabel,’ declares the Lord, ‘Be strong, Joshua son of Jozadak, the high priest. Be strong, all you people of the land,’ declares the Lord, ‘and work. **For I am with you**,’ declares the Lord Almighty. This is what I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt. And my Spirit remains among you. Do not fear” (Haggai 1:13, 2:4, 5).

Similarly, Jesus, in His high priestly prayer, is concerned for His disciples in the world and prays to the Father **to keep them** and to “...protect them by the power of your name...” (John 17:11).

The psalmist testifies of God’s keeping power in many contexts. “You, Lord, keep my lamp burning...” (Psalm 18:28) can be understood as God sustaining life itself. God keeps His children from willful sins and destructive habits (Psalm 19:13) and keeps their way pure (Psalm 119:9) as they live according to His Word. The Lord will not let their foot slip; He watches while they sleep and will keep them from all harm. He watches over their lives, including their comings and goings (Psalm 121); He keeps them from the hands of evil, protecting them from violent men (Psalm 140:4) and the traps and snares they set (Psalm 141:9). He commands His angels to guard and protect them (Psalm 91:11-13), and His preserving power cares for the faithful as His eyes roam the earth looking for whom He may deliver

(Psalm 31:23; 33:18-22). God the rock is a shelter where He preserves in His dwelling, His own (Psalm 31:20). Hannah’s prayer echoes this theme, “He will guard the feet of his saints” (1 Samuel 2:9).

Jude gives us a most cherished benediction. “To him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault, and with great joy—to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen” (Jude 24-25).

Further study could be done on the use of other words such as guard, protect, and preserve to further demonstrate God’s sustaining power in keeping His children.

This book seeks to show how the sending church, missionary team leader, mission administrator, and member care provider can better lean into fulfilling their responsibilities as ones who become the presence of Jesus, walking alongside and keeping the global messengers as they carry out the Great Commission.

Acknowledgements

This book has been a team effort. I am so grateful for the editing expertise of Shelby Keith in taking the original writings from a variety of authors and transforming them into more readable chapters for us all.

I am grateful to my “fellow African” Dan Nel, who did the design work for our cover (<https://www.marula.ca>).

Gladys Thompson previously worked at The Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada’s National Ministry Centre (NMC) in the Communications Department and was the project manager for the trilogy I worked on with Charlie Cook. I was thrilled when she agreed to come “out of retirement” to bring her considerable talents and experience to consulting and the formatting of the interactive PDF.

Alexis Tjart and I previously worked together for three years in the same office. She is behind the organizing and uploading of books in three languages to the Global Vault Mission Books website and has prepared the printed book’s formatting. <https://www.lulu.com/spotlight/globalvault>

To Shelby, Dan, Gladys, and Alexis my sincere thank you. I love working with you.

Foreword: Global Souls

by Duncan Westwood

For many years, my wife and family served as missionaries to the Chinese culture. Upon returning to America, Britain and Canada, I acquired a Ph.D. that integrated the disciplines of Clinical Psychology, Judeo-Christian Spiritual Formation and Direction and Cross-Cultural Studies.

We were invited to join the International Health Management in Toronto, where we served on an interdisciplinary team of healthcare providers—physicians, nurses, counsellors, spiritual directors, and administrators. Thus, we served three critical stages of the missionary life cycle—pre-departure, overseas and re-entry, repatriation and retirement.

Now in our semi-retirement, we continue to enjoy our work. I am a Consultant of Expatriate Care and Development, and my wife Olwyn is my administrator.

Ron Brown has been a friend and mentor. He has a genuine knack for gathering fellow international workers to embolden courage and confidence to generate their research and writing. Each of the contributors has a *global soul*. Indeed, I count them as friends who have blessed us through these chapters by their faith and fortitude.

ON MISSION: Caring for Those Who Went should be read by pastors of churches, missionary personnel departments, missionary candidates, field missionaries, third culture kids, and expats going overseas and returning.

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Contributors

BECKY MATCHULLIS (RN, Foothills School of Nursing) is an International Worker (IW) Family Resilience Coach who nurtures missionary kids (MKs) and adult third culture kids (ATCKs), debriefs couples and families, and teaches.

Becky grew up in Malaysia, Hong Kong, and Canada as an MK and experienced a British boarding school, an American international school, and a Canadian public school. As an IW, she served with her husband, Harvey, in Indonesia, Cambodia, and Kuwait.

Becky developed, directed, and taught the MK Re-entry Camp at Home Ministry Seminar for The Alliance Canada for 19 years. She and Harv have raised four third culture kids (TCKs), one adopted from Cambodia. Becky is a certified professional co-active coach from the Coaches Training Institute as well as a certified professional coach with the International Coach Federation. <https://www.beckymatchullis.com/>

BETH COOK (BSN Liberty University, Columbia International University) serves as Member Care Developer for the Global Ministries Department of The Alliance Canada (formerly known as The Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada), serving as point person for preventative and restorative care for global workers around the world. She met her husband John during their seminary studies, and they served as IWs in Central Asia for eleven years. She previously worked as a registered nurse in various clinical settings. Beth and John live in Toronto.

HARVEY MATCHULLIS (MA Azusa Pacific University, MMiss Ambrose University) has served the Christian community since 1983 in Canada, Asia, and the Middle East, fulfilling roles as a church planter, international worker, international church pastor, denominational leader and ministry entrepreneur. In June 2019, Harv re-joined the National Ministry Centre of The Alliance Canada as director of the Candidate Development Office and facilitator for marketplace. He is tasked with recruiting and developing people from churches to engage their lives and vocations throughout the world as global ambassadors of God's Kingdom. He and his wife Becky live in Calgary.

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JUDITH MILNE WIEBE (MA studies Tyndale Seminary) began working with The Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada (now known as The Alliance Canada) in 1983 and soon became the guiding arm of Member Care in Global Ministries. Though her home was in Toronto, she travelled to all the regions where Canadian Alliance workers were based to understand their issues. She and her husband Doug now live in Winnipeg.

MARION DICKE (MA Canadian Theological Seminary) spent 35 years working in Africa. She started as a nurse-midwife and nursing instructor in a mission hospital. She then worked in primary healthcare and discipleship with an unreached people group in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Following training in Critical Incident Stress Debriefing, Marion joined the [Mobile Member Care Team](#) based in West Africa, providing crisis care and training for personnel from many different missionary agencies and ethnic backgrounds. As of 2014, she has been based in Vermilion, Alberta, where she provides (virtually) debriefing and member care for the mission community. In addition, she is a certified spiritual director.

PAULA JONES (MA Trinity Seminary), with her husband, Mark, started as an international worker in Asia in 1992. They have worked as regional developers for Asia based in Chiang Mai, Thailand, for the past ten years. Paula has training in coaching, assessment and debriefing.

RICHARD ENNS (MA Ambrose University) has worked cross-culturally since 1992. Over these years, he and his wife Merinda have ministered in Côte d'Ivoire, West Africa, Quebec, Canada, and as regional leaders over Africa with The Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada for almost 15 years. In those years, Richard has served as team leader, language supervisor, international church preaching pastor, advisor to the Mobile Member Care Team, and co-led the orientation program of new international workers.

RONALD BROWN (DMin Trinity International University) worked for 26 years

in Central and West Africa. He served as a team and regional leader in Africa with The Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada. Ron experienced three political evacuations in Central Africa. During his years in Africa, he was also associated with the Mobile Member Care Team, which provided training in member care for mission team leaders in several countries. His doctoral project is entitled “Self-identified retention factors by Western missionaries in Africa who have experienced traumatic events.” He and his wife Myra live in Calgary. <https://globalvault.ca>

RUTH-ANNE GILBERTSON (BRE Canadian Bible College, Canadian Theological Seminary) is an ordained worker with The Alliance Canada and worked with her husband Ric in Global Ministries for 24 years. They lived and worked in Venezuela for 15 years, developing and implementing a training program for the church leaders. After that, they served as regional developers in Latin America and finally as directors of Mobilization and Development of new IWs. Ruth-Anne and Ric live in Calgary. Ruth Anne is a certified life coach and spiritual director.

SURESH G. (Ph.D. YU, MDiv Tyndale Seminary, MBA University of Leicester) works as a missions mobilization developer with the team of district missions mobilizers, supporting international workers in their local church engagements and the local churches in their global missions’ engagements. Before returning to Toronto, Suresh and his spouse served as tentmakers in a Creative Access Country. Suresh is also a practicing leadership development consultant and an executive coach.

Part A

DEVELOPING HEALTHY WORKERS

Chapter 1

Called and Nurtured into Missions

by Ruth-Anne Gilbertson

Choosing a vocation or knowing the career for which one might prepare and train takes self-awareness, understanding of aptitudes and skills, wise counsel from those who know us, and a recognition of what has impacted and shaped us, just to name a few. Putting these things together is referred to as a process of discernment.

As I look at my own life and walk with others in this discernment process, I see a couple of key elements that help us to understand who we are and what we are to do for work.

1. Our primary calling is to be loved by God and to love Him. This fundamental relationship permeates and impacts my relationship with myself and others. This is called the Greatest Commandment:

He replied, “*You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your being, and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: You must love your neighbor as you love yourself* (Matthew 22:37-39 CEB¹).

2. God has created us so our lives would have a purpose and we would bear fruit (John 15:1-8). Purpose and fruit are the natural outflow of a life lived placing one’s relationship with God first.

Instead, we are God’s accomplishment, created in Christ Jesus to do good things. God planned for these good things to be the way that we live our lives (Ephesians 2:10 CEB).

3. God uniquely designed each of us to participate in His work in the places, environments, and with the people He has prepared for us to impact for His Kingdom.

I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, then you will produce much fruit. Without me, you can’t do anything. (John 15:5 CEB)

Being fruitful is a natural outflow of our lives when we keep our loving relationship with God the primary focus.

1. *Common English Bible* (CEB). Copyright © 2011 by Common English Bible

There is much to be said about this, and whole books have been written on vocation, career, and calling, which are well worth reading. However, for the purpose of this chapter, I simply want to highlight how it is God's design for each of us, no matter what career we are in, to be part of His work. He knows how He has created us and where He needs us to be. So, as we grow in our relationship with God and our love for Him, our task is simply to pay attention to the passions and desires He put there and trust Him to lead us step by step.

...it is God's design for each of us, no matter what career we are in, to be part of His work.

I grew up in a time when we would often refer to people who entered vocational ministry, either as pastors or missionaries, as ones who are "called" by God. I still believe that. And I also believe those in other vocations are equally called, based on these two core truths.

The purpose of this chapter is to consider those who are called primarily to the vocation of ministry and, more specifically, to cross-cultural work. Both my husband (Ric) and I have been called by God into the vocation of ministry. We have reflected on how the call of God in our lives was sensed and nurtured. Through telling our stories, you will notice we came from very different backgrounds and how God's work with us, and in us independently, was distinct.

As you read our stories, I would encourage you to take time to reflect on your own calling. How has God nurtured you as you discerned and moved into your vocational calling? What were the things God used to nurture you into your calling?

Some of you may have been asked to walk alongside others in the process of discernment. Gone are the days when people enter a vocation for their entire working career. Instead, it is more the norm for people to move from one career to another. So, this discernment may happen at various times in a person's life. How do you help others see and recognize God's call? How might the call be nurtured?

Homelife

How has a person's early years shaped who they are today? How might these formative experiences uniquely prepare someone for a life of cross-cultural service?

Ruth-Anne:

I was born into the home of a pastoral couple who saw ministry as a way of life. Our lives revolved around people and the church and its various activities. Our home was filled with guests for meals and overnights. On many occasions, we took people into our family for weeks at a time, all of which nurtured in me a love for God, His Church, and the people around me. My call into missions was nurtured in our family through personally knowing and interacting with missionaries (many

of whom were family friends and guests in our home) and praying for missionaries in our family prayer times.

Ric:

In my early years, I experienced much tension in our home. My parents were older when I was born. My siblings were twenty, eighteen, and fourteen. By the time I was born, my parent's marriage was disintegrating. So at the age of five, my mom and I moved out on our own. There were no Jesus-followers in our extended family, and church was not a part of our lives.

I was gifted with a mom who sacrificed much to give me a home filled with love. We did not have much, and we had to move often, but she showed me how to be content with what we had. I was gifted with a father who stayed in my life and with whom I could spend time.

I see how God used these events to nurture in me an ability to enjoy what I had, the ability to transition from place to place, and the ability to be independent.

God Speaking

What were some of your early recollections of God speaking to you? Who did you come to understand God to be to you? Who did you comprehend yourself to be? Recall a time when you felt deep in your soul, "I was made for this." How was God using this to speak to you?

Ruth-Anne:

I was about seven when I first felt God call me to international work, or as we would say then, to missions. After the service one Sunday, I stood with my mother as she talked with the missionary who had been speaking. The lady turned to me and asked what I wanted to do when I grew up. I replied, "Maybe a teacher or a nurse," and then my mom added, "or maybe a missionary." How I have come to understand what happened to me then is the Spirit of God whispered to my spirit, "This is what I have made you for." From then on, as I wrestled with choices in my life, from what subjects to concentrate on in high school, to what career to head towards, to who I would marry, it was always with the conviction I was to go overseas.

Ric:

In my last couple of years of high school, I was invited by a school friend to attend youth group with him at his church. To be honest, I went because there were so many pretty girls. But soon, God began to speak.

One summer, I attended a youth conference; our purpose in life was the theme. It was precisely the questions I had been asking as I thought about the future. I knew God was speaking, inviting me to follow Him. There was a long thirty-six-hour bus

ride back home from the conference. I was under so much conviction from God I could not sleep.

Arriving home, I went to our pastor's house because I wanted to follow Jesus. The pastor was not there, but his daughter led me through how to respond to God's call. I was baptized a few months later. The same day, two different people approached me to say they felt God was calling me into ministry. I had wanted to be a lawyer, but I knew God was changing my focus. I was nervous about telling my dad that I felt I was to pursue a career in vocational ministry; instead of going to university, I would be heading to Bible college. After I voiced this to him, he gave me one of his final blessings in my life. He said, "Son, if that is what will make you happy, then I support you one hundred percent."

Church Life

How have your experiences in God's family and meeting with His people shaped your understanding of who you are in the Body of Christ? What are your spiritual gifts? How are you serving the Body of Christ locally?

Ruth-Anne:

The churches where I was raised often talked about missions and hosted a weeklong missionary emphasis once a year. This kept before me the needs of the world around me. It was my favourite time of the year. I loved the stories and felt drawn to someday be a part of going. Also, the church nurtured me through programs where I was discipled into understanding what it meant to be a follower of Jesus. As I struggled to make wise decisions in my teen years, a very active youth group and several activities kept me tethered and growing in my walk with God—from Bible quizzing to weekly youth events and Bible study along with yearly camps and retreats. As a young teen, I was also asked to begin serving by helping out with Sunday school, which eventually led me to teach my own class. All of this not only nurtured my relationship with God but helped me to explore and begin to understand my passions and gifts.

Ric:

I was discipled and nurtured in my walk with God before I had even decided to follow Him. In attending the youth group, I learned what it meant to be a Jesus follower. The youth pastor, who had a similar family background, took time with me. As I grew in my walk with God, the church encouraged me and stood behind me.

Partway through my college years, the church invited me to a one-year internship. This gave me a deeper understanding of what vocational ministry was while helping me discover my gifts and passions and how those would relate to the vocation of ministry. Missions was there before me. My church also had a strong emphasis on missions. However, at the time, I thought missionaries

were people who could not make it in their own culture, so instead, they went overseas. It is interesting how God continued to nurture me despite my initial misunderstanding.

Life Experiences

What have been some significant life experiences where you gained a love for different cultures or were awakened to the needs of the world around you?

Ruth-Anne:

During my grade eleven year, my grandparents were invited to Colombia to train pastors on beekeeping. I studied Spanish in school, which led them to extend an invitation for me to join them. During this seven-week trip, I got a taste of what life overseas might involve. It not only reconfirmed what I had been sensing for the direction of my life but gave me a deep desire to return to Latin America. However, I kept this sense of calling into missions to myself.

In the summer of 1980, I had the opportunity to visit Guatemala for six weeks to live alongside and help missionaries. The experience confirmed God was indeed calling me to serve Him cross-culturally. This was a place of deeper surrender in my life, as I grappled with being willing to do what God had called me to without any restrictions on my “yes.” After this, I was finally able to declare to others what I sensed God saying to me about serving overseas.

Ric:

After my first year of Bible college, I went to Europe to attend Capernwray schools in Germany and Austria. This experience became foundational in my life. My family was not one that travelled. I was an anomaly to them. But travelling in Europe, and other places over the year, gave me a love for adventure and different cultures. The school experience led me deeper into Jesus, understanding His love for me and the world around me. Sitting at a youth club in Germany during one of our outreaches, I first felt God speaking about those who would never hear the Gospel if someone did not go.

A few years later, I ended up in Colombia for six weeks. I got to see what cross-cultural workers did. I lived in their homes, helped with their work, asked questions, and heard stories. One night, while everyone else was asleep, I sat at a window overlooking the city. I heard God say, “I want you back here someday.” I understood Him to mean, not specifically to this city, but as a cross-cultural worker in Latin America.

Sitting at a youth club
in Germany...I first felt
God speaking about
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if someone did not go.

Submit to the Process

A big part of discerning a cross-cultural calling is applying with a mission organization and trusting the screening process they have developed to help confirm your sense of calling to cross-cultural work and the organization itself. First, you will need to find out what kind of training would be necessary and then submit to the required steps and processes. As you start, you will find the process will train you, refine you, and help you to discern if this is a true calling of God.

Ruth-Anne:

My sense of calling to vocational ministry was strong by the time I graduated from high school. But, as with any vocation, I knew I would need the proper training to go into ministry. So I enrolled in Canadian Bible College in Regina, Saskatchewan. These years were formative for me as I began to discover who I was, who God was to me, and how He had gifted me.

In the last year of studies, there was a straightforward process for those going into vocational ministry, which included being accredited with The Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada (now changed to The Alliance Canada). At the time, you would declare whether your trajectory was ministry in Canada or overseas. In choosing overseas, you became part of the candidate pool, which guided the ongoing preparation process right through until departure to your assigned country.

Upon graduation, I began looking for a ministry placement. This was the next step in the process of becoming a cross-cultural worker. It was a way of developing ministry experience and learning before moving into an international context. In this part of the process, Ric and I began to date and then marry.

Ric:

Although I sensed a call to vocational ministry in my last year of high school and received my father's blessing to go, the first year of Bible college was a huge culture shock for me. I discovered so many areas of immaturity in my new life as a follower of Jesus. Going to Capernwray, travelling Europe, and doing the internship in my church became keys for nurturing my call and growing in my relationship with God. By the time I returned to Bible college to finish my degree, I knew God was leading me. During those final years of my undergrad program, God confirmed His call to cross-cultural ministry through my trip to Colombia. Ruth-Anne and I had begun dating in those years and were married just after my graduation.

Ric and Ruth-Anne:

We continued preparing for overseas by attending seminary, at Canadian Theological Seminary and then Regent College. Ric pursued degrees, and Ruth-Anne picked up courses along the way. These years of study not only prepared us theologically and pastorally, but they were environments where our passions for

God and our desire to be on mission with Him were fanned into flames.

Together we entered the ministry in a small town in central Alberta. Both of us had grown up in cities in southern Ontario. Moving into a small community centred around oil, gas, and agriculture was very cross-cultural for us. This amazing group of people allowed us to practice what had been theory while teaching us what it meant to move into a different culture and love those God had called us to. This became a huge learning experience for us as we would soon be entering into yet another culture.

During these years, conversations with a person who headed up the mobilization process increased as we began to discern together where God might be leading us. We communicated our sense of calling as well as our gifts and passions; we were presented with three different scenarios. Both our hearts were roused when we heard about Venezuela. We took time to pray and put it before God, feeling His confirmation Venezuela was where we would go.

Summary

It is God who calls us into the vocations He has for us. He is the One who leads us step-by-step and nurtures us along the way. It starts from the time we are born, and He leads us into places and spaces which will shape us according to His good plans and purposes. Although God delights to use us, His greater delight is to love us and for us to love Him in return. We are first and foremost created for an intimate relationship with our Triune God in whom “we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28). Therefore, a focus on deepening the relationship with God is paramount. Out of this deepening, the rest will flow.

For Further Reading

Article by Henri Nouwen, *From Solitude to Community to Ministry* - [From Solitude to Community to Ministry | CT Pastors | Christianity Today](#)



Ministry in the Image of God: The Trinitarian Shape of Christian Service by Stephen Seamands

“This book combines the power of old ideas and contemporary experience with life-changing outcome” (Timothy C. Morgan).

“Seamands connects the dots between ancient doctrine, Holy Scripture, modern theology and Christian experience, giving us a vision of the Trinity in life that is comprehensible, subtly childlike, a joy to embrace and an invitation to be embraced” (David Hansen).



Courage and Calling: Embracing Your God-Given Potential by
Gordon Smith

Discover your vocation by listening to God and becoming co-workers with Him.

Chapter 2

Identity in Christ: The Cross-Cultural Worker's Firm Foundation

by Beth Cook

“When I grow up, I want to do what she does,” I whispered to my husband, John, in 2004. I was a fully grown woman with two children at the time and considered mature by most. We were attending our pre-departure training to go overseas to Central Asia, having spent two weeks watching Judy Wiebe oversee various aspects of our training alongside other wise trainers and facilitators. The topics we learned about ranged from emotional health, spiritual formation, family care, and teaming and relationships, to name just a few which stand out all these years later. I could not quite put my finger on it, and the term “Member Care” was a new one to me, but I was deeply drawn to how Judy lived out her gifts for our benefit and the benefit of Christ’s Kingdom. It resonated so deeply I verbalized it on the last morning of our time together in my whisper to John. Little did I know the journey it would be for me to “grow up” into the role.

My journey towards overseas work began at an early age. Growing up in a small town, in a small state in the USA, the stories of missions always drew me in. Hearing stories of family members in full-time mission work also fueled my curiosity. I began saying I wanted to be a missionary at age five, and by age fifteen, I was sure this was how the Lord was calling me to serve.

Going forward, every “yes” and every “no” was filtered through my call. What do I study at university? Nursing. Did I really want to be a nurse? Not particularly, but it seemed a good means to an end at the time. Where would I do those studies? Somewhere I could get sound biblical training simultaneously, so off I went to Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia.

How do I get an idea of what missionary work entails firsthand? I travelled with a group of fellow nursing students to the newly “former” Soviet Union, countries like Russia, Romania, and Hungary and a few years later on a more hands-on medical missions trip to Mexico through the university. Coming from a non-denominational background, I began exploring mission agencies and opportunities as I navigated seminary training at Columbia International University in Columbia, South Carolina. All this while working full-time as a registered nurse at a local

hospital, gaining hands-on professional training while also stretching my mind and soul with courses like Hermeneutics, Cross-Cultural Anthropology, and my favourite, The Gospel of John.

My extracurricular time was also filtered through my calling. How would I spend the weekend off? Missions Conference, of course. Would I go on a date with this or that man? Not if he didn't share my calling to overseas work. No time for distractions. Surrounded by like-minded friends, mentored by several wise women, I was making my way one *yes*, one surrender at a time. A thousand little *yeses* to God's call.

It was my third part-time year of seminary when I began working in earnest towards tangible steps overseas. After completing my three-week training with TEAM Mission agency, I was appointed to work as a nurse in Nepal. I began raising my support but felt a restraint. Encouraged by those around me to take a month to pray and wait, I did. On the last day of my month's wait, a friend called and asked me for a date. My mother, who had been fasting and praying during the previous month, quoted John 1:6 to me, "There came a man sent from God whose name was John." I did not really correct her interpretation of this Scripture because I, too, was pretty delighted this kind and gentle, hilarious, and handsome Canadian had asked me out. John and I were engaged in four months and married five months later—a whirlwind courtship and marriage. This was also my introduction to the Alliance world, a wonderful secondary benefit to being John's wife.

Our mutual calling towards overseas work and our desire to see our call lived out among places where few or none have heard led us to Central Asia. Leaders like Wally Albrecht, Gerald and Dorothy Hogenbirk, Garry and Pam James, Stuart and Joanne Lightbody, and friends like Stephen and Annette Ford encouraged us on this journey. God made a way for us to prepare for this work alongside John's teaching and learning to parent first Sophie (2001) and then Annie (2003). With these two in tow, we packed up an insane number of things (what did we actually think we were going to do with those car seats in a Lada taxi with no seatbelts?). We said goodbye to four wonderful parents, six supportive siblings and their families and stepped into the unknown. People ask me if I was scared. After all, we were moving three hundred miles from Baghdad in the middle of a war! But I have to say, after so many little *yeses*, the next *yes* just made complete sense and brought much peace.

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In hindsight, the next ten years, frankly, feel like a blur. We learned a language that sounded like music. We absorbed a culture made up of such a mix of other cultures it felt like untangling a giant clump of yarn at times. Was this from Persian culture? Tsarist times? Soviet times? Is this the influence of neighbours once again trying to tell our small country who they should be in the new millennium? We lived among people who had been conquered century after century in a tug of war between major powers. This had left them a people battered and bruised, combative and conflict-oriented, and yet, incredibly, hospitable, relational, and generous. In this paradigm of contradictions, we raised our, by this time, three children, having added Benjamin to our family in 2006.

We were anticipating our second year-long home assignment. The term had been a hard one. Though only in-country ten years, we had seen hundreds of fellow workers leave, more than four hundred men, women, and children including friends, teachers, co-workers, and mentors. The revolving door of workers is a challenge in most places, but it can be especially challenging in a relatively small interdependent community. Twenty-four friends left on the same plane one hot June morning, our best friends and accountability support network. This began a tough season for us. Our teammates were temporarily deported for a long season; our leaders could not visit us on the ground because of the difficulties in obtaining tourist visas. We felt utterly alone.

Additionally, we faced numerous visa renewal challenges and were asked to leave the country three times, literally on a midnight train to a neighbouring country. I must admit, the thought crossed my mind more than once, "if they don't want us here that badly, why are we staying?!" Everyone wants to feel a little bit wanted, after all.

Both John and I experienced the challenge of living in a creative access country, one that is closed to spreading the Gospel. After ten years, it had taken a toll on me in particular. I never felt like we were completely honest with our local friends about what we did for a living. For me, someone who highly values authenticity and complete honesty, it felt disingenuous and even deceitful. At the same time, I also felt a growing guilt and shame over being a pretty ineffective church planter, the very thing our churches in Canada had given sacrificially for me to do. More evidence of my intrinsic need for authenticity and honesty. In reality, I realized the things that brought me the most joy and used my gifts to the fullest were not evangelism or church planting.

For the second term, we received our visas through the small parent-run school for TCKs (third culture kids). We had to pour a certain amount of time into this small business to fulfill our visa requirements. John chaired the board,

taught after-school classes to local kids, and taught a few electives in addition to his work as team leader and ESL (English as a Second Language) teacher outside the school. I became the school librarian and *de facto* school nurse. For me, loving and nurturing kids from various national backgrounds, mentoring parents and students, encouraging staff through acts of service and hospitality, providing direction for next steps in health care in a country with a less than ideal health system were some highlights from this season.

To quote Charles Dickens, *it was the best of times; it was the worst of times.*¹ While I enjoyed this work, I was also slowly sinking in a sea of failure and shame of my own making. During our last months there, I diligently packed up, found renters for our home, sold, stored, listed, and labelled. Ask any international worker (IW); packing up for a year is no joke, especially for a family of five. By this time, I knew I was not well, but for once, my diagnostic skills failed me, leading me to a great sense of failure. I prided myself on being a fixer, making things better and smoother for those around me. Then, in the Spring, I found myself faced with the inevitable reality—I was not okay, I had no idea how to fix myself, and I was likely going to upend life for all of us. At this realization, the shame engulfed me. I went through the motions of goodbyes and limped home. As we made our way to General Assembly during the summer in Ottawa, I said to John that if anyone scratches the surface, they will know I'm not okay, but I don't think I can tell anyone myself.

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At a pivotal moment, Judy Wiebe scratched the surface and then dug deeper and saw me with a depth of compassion and care; it still brings tears to my eyes. She saw my authentic self, in all its brokenness, and did not turn away, did not label, just sat with me in it and connected me to care with International Health Management (IHM). Likewise, Dr. Ken Gamble and Dr. Duncan Westwood cared amazingly for me. So, while I will not go into my journey of those next dark months here, I will say those months started me on a journey of healing which began to make sense of all those *yeses*, all those heartbreaks, and allow me to see the beautiful tapestry God had been weaving all along.

My dear friend, Donna Frentz, says God takes people all over the world first to have His will in them, to change THEM, and then He uses them to change the world. This resonates deeply with me. Because while all those *yeses* were

1. This phrase is from the famous opening paragraph of Charles Dickens' novel, *A Tale of Two Cities*.

important (especially the one to marry John!) and changed my trajectory little by little, in hindsight, there was a fatal flaw.

The flaw was in me. A lie, or series of lies, I had believed from a very young age about my identity and about what God thinks about me. I thought doing the hardest thing I could imagine doing for Jesus added to my worth in His eyes. While I would never have said it so explicitly, or even verbalized it, this seed was in me. To me, my success or failure as an international worker hinged on what I did and not who I was. Time and time again, I was trying to pour out the last drops of myself for Him instead of letting Him continuously fill me to overflowing. Ignoring my natural and spiritual gifts because I did not see their value, I struggled under the weight of not being good at things He did not gift me to do. Being so determined to “do” missionary-like things, I missed the most important one: listening to the whisper of the Spirit of God. Instead, I sinfully compared my gifts to those around me and thought what God had given me simply was not enough or not right to do the work. The shame and comparison took their toll.

To begin breaking down those lies within me, God took me to the other side of the world and to an incredibly complex cultural context. He did it because He loves me so much. He did it because He knew my heart was to live for Him, even if I did not see the meaning clearly while trying so hard to do it in my own strength. He chose to take my sincere desire to love Him with all of who I am and to show me how to do just that. He beautifully and graciously brought me to the end of myself.

You may be reading this and thinking this is a unique story or a “one-off” anomaly. However, I would not be sharing this incredibly personal story with you if this was an isolated experience. The issue of identity in Christ is one I face most commonly and recurringly in my role as Member Care Developer. It is a journey most IWs will admit they have had to wrestle through in one way or another.

I often see this when dealing with restorative issues². Commonly, I can identify a false identity or misunderstanding of identity in Christ at the root of almost every moral discipline situation I engage in through my role (which in these situations is to provide restorative care for a season). Lack of heart understanding of identity in Christ's love also can be found in many of the emotional health issues IWs bring to me and at the heart of many conflicts and relational matters arising on

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2. I discuss preventive and restorative care further in chapter nine.

the field. Individual anchoring in identity in Christ profoundly impacts teams and is evidenced in the healthiest of groups. Without this firm foundation, one or more team members and co-labourers look to each other to find their identity or look for identity in their work's success. While this may sustain for a while, ultimately, cracks will begin to appear, people will get hurt, and the cause of Christ is compromised. When our success becomes our identity—our god—the Father must step in to correct us.

The Spirit's invitation is quite the opposite. When we live together in community, aware of our own belovedness and of each participant's worth in the eyes of God because of the power of the Cross, we live in incredible freedom. The world cannot help but be drawn to this kind of individual and community. The human heart longs for it. Henri Nouwen says it so well,

“That's where ministry starts, because your freedom is anchored in claiming your belovedness. That allows you to go into this world and touch people, heal them, speak with them, and make them aware that they are beloved, chosen, and blessed. When you discover your belovedness by God, you see the belovedness of other people and call that forth. It's an incredible mystery of God's love that the more you know how deeply you are loved, the more you will see how deeply your sisters and your brothers in the human family are loved.³”

It is so foundational to the work we seek to do and the incarnational lives we seek to live among the least-reached that it simply cannot be ignored. It is incredible the power of vulnerability and weakness when fully surrendered to the overwhelming, all-encompassing, unwavering, and unconditional love of God. Anchored in anything less, even the most profound of gifts, talents, or abilities, all our work is chaff and stubble. This can be difficult for IWs. If you know any personally, you will know what an incredible number of hoops we had to go through to get overseas. Just pursuing full-time vocational service overseas with The Alliance Canada requires a great deal of discipline and effort (read: paperwork!), in addition to other professional studies required to have under one's belt. We are a group who like challenges, who are not afraid of doing hard things, for whom the word *sacrifice* is a part of a sacred calling. Is it any wonder our calling can too easily slip into identity's prime position?

Through this season of discovering the depth of love God has for me, not because of what I do, but simply because He calls me beloved, He highlighted a passage of Scripture for me that has become instrumental in my daily life as

3. [Moving from Solitude to Community to Ministry](#), Henri Nouwen. This article originally appeared in *Leadership's* Spring 1995 issue. © Copyright Henri Nouwen 1995.

His beloved. It also overflows into the work I am now called to do as Member Care Developer.

Colossians 3 is a rich chapter, calling us to put off and put on various things. The call to holiness is woven throughout this chapter. However, for me, the pivotal verse comes midway through the chapter, in verse 12. Starting at the second half of verse 12 to verse 17, we see the perfect list of what we would look for when we screen candidates for overseas work—compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, ability to bear with others and forgive them, and of course, love. I must admit when these are all in place, it is abundant evidence of the Spirit's work in an individual's life and truly is a delight to behold both in times of green leaf as well as drought (Jeremiah 17:7-8).

However, when looking at all the things we are to put off (there is quite a list in Colossians 3:5-10) and looking at all we are invited to put on (verses 12-17), we would miss the point of the chapter, in my opinion, if we do not read the beginning of verse 12 more carefully: "Put on then, *as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved...*" (ESV⁴) and then the ideal candidate list follows. Before God tells us what to put on, He reminds us of who we are and the only reason why this list is even possible in our lives.

We are Chosen

Our relationship with God is not accidental or a fluke. He chose me. Psalm 139 gives us a beautiful reminder that God knows us and chooses us. Our identity is not in Him choosing you or me to be an international worker, pastor, doctor, lawyer, wonderful spouse, fulfilled single, faithful child, or loyal friend. Instead, our identity is in the reality of Him choosing you and me to be His sons and daughters. Take a moment and let this deeply sink in. This is an essential reality to the identity of an international worker.

I can no longer fathom why we put missionaries on a pedestal. We believe somehow, they are "more" chosen, even over others in full-time ministry and definitely more so than Christians who are not in full-time vocational ministry. There are so many problems with this statement that I do not know where to begin. I will save it for another chapter in another book. Regardless of our calling (everyone has a vital calling once they have heard Him whisper their name), our identity cannot be in the calling. It is putting the cart before the horse and can only lead to various dysfunctions. God chose us to be His children. Full stop. The reality of this choosing leads us into deeper closeness and being known by Him,

4. English Standard Version (ESV). *The Holy Bible*, English Standard Version. ESV® Text Edition: 2016. Copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.

and then we hear the invitation of His calling as part of our ongoing relationship with Him. Our calling does not make us more or any less chosen by God.

We are Holy

Holiness is not a very culturally popular word in this day and age. Do not believe the lie IWs are somehow already in their fully holy state in some unique way that those of us who remain in our passport country are not. They are in the process of sanctification, just like every other believer with whom you lock eyes or do life. However, for IWs, the sanctification process occurs in the pressure cooker of cross-cultural pressures, language ambiguity, different cultural norms, distance from the people who have known and mentored them well over the years, and various other unique circumstances.

Holiness is vital. And yet again, if we try to achieve holiness through our own strength, it will ultimately crack, as it is skewed through the lens of our own humanity. No, the only holiness an IW can count on—that any believer can count on—is the holiness from the shed blood, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. When His sacrifice is our anchor point for holiness, when we depend on the Spirit to guide us into holiness, it flows graciously in our lives. What others may see as a restriction becomes, in reality, fuller freedom. Every licensed worker of The Alliance Canada agrees to *The Call to Excellence and Code of Conduct of The Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada*.

I have heard one or two grumbles when walking alongside an IW dealing with a sin area in their life about this code of conduct. “Who can live up to that?” This grieves me more than words can communicate. Because when this is the question asked, it clarifies the heart of the document has been missed. What is outlined there is an invitation to live to the fullest all the good God has for us. It is true freedom, not restriction. Holiness is actually God’s gift to us, endowed upon us by Christ, led in us by the Spirit, to live in the goodness coming from life in Christ. So when we make it about our own ability to live up to a standard, I’m afraid we have missed the point altogether. God chose us, and God makes us holy.

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We are God’s Beloved

The verse actually says *dearly loved* in the ESV. Several Scripture passages

uniquely remind us of this identity we hold as beloved of God. One of my favourites is in Daniel, chapters 9 and 10 (ESV). For context, Daniel has received some incredible visions. The Bible says, Daniel is so overwhelmed by what he sees that he prays and pleads for mercy with fasting and sackcloth (9:3), resulting in confession (9:20). After the following vision, Daniel is left mourning (10:2), without strength (10:8), in a dead faint (10:9), trembling (10:10), and breathless (10:17).

What does God have the angel say to Daniel at this point? Get up, you fool? Be stronger? Try harder? Suck it up or toughen up? Quite the contrary! Before fully explaining any visions, the angel Gabriel reminds Daniel he is greatly loved, not once, not twice, but three times (9:23, 10:11, 10:19). God knows Daniel is shaken, and He knows the visions require explanation and response, but He first reminds Daniel, through the angel Gabriel no less, that he, Daniel, is greatly loved. Daniel has not “done” much in these passages except demonstrate justifiable human frailty. But the power of the words of love and encouragement sent to him by God strengthens him for what he needs to hear, how he needs to respond, and how he needs to be God’s servant in His specific time and place in history.

Belovedness is not something we earn. It is also not something we can lose. The life of David is an excellent example of this fact. The life of the beloved is a beautiful picture of the unchanging, immutable nature of a loving God. We think calling ourselves beloved somehow puts the attention on us, but really it puts the spotlight right on God. We are loved because He chooses it should be so. Why is this so important in the life of any believer and, in this specific context, of an international worker? Because Satan and the enemies of the cross know this is our greatest strength, being God’s beloved, and he will do all he can to assault this truth and try to deconstruct it. Never is this truer than when a believer seeks to invite a non-believer into this identity of love and nurture them to faith.

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In my story, I would say I had a fairly adequate idea and understanding of identity in Christ. I am sure I had to fill out something about it on my application to seminary, TEAM, the Alliance, and various papers for classes. I am also sure I had a good Scripture-based answer to those questions. However, we cannot fully taste the exquisite joy that comes from being simply God’s chosen, holy, beloved child until we allow God to strip away the other things we cling to for identity (competency, capacity, fluency, altruism).

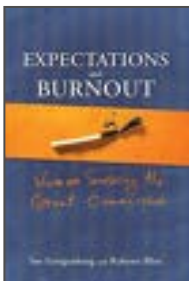
About a year after I began coming to the end of myself and beginning a whole new stage of the journey with Jesus, we were asked to consider stepping into this role upon Judy’s retirement. Perhaps for the first time, I caught a glimpse of the

tapestry from God's point of view. From down here, the perspective of a bunch of seemingly loose and jumbled strings, knotted and matted a bit, didn't seem so beautiful. However, once I began seeing myself through the eyes of the One who loves me, I began to see the beautiful thing He was making of my life. Not only free from the shame and failure which had threatened to drag me under but now able and willing to throw the life preserver to others struggling in the same ways, struggling to get through to the other side of the journey ahead. God promises to use us, not just in spite of where we have been, but perhaps because of where we have been. Is it not an incredible story to bring to a hurting and dying world? Those without Christ do not need to see how great we are; they need to see how great our God is, shown through our own humanity. God does not use us because we are so great, but because He is.

Now, I'm living my dream. My whisper to John, now nearly two decades ago, about wanting to do what Judy did has come to fruition. Little did I know it was actually the whisper of the Spirit to my own heart. Little did I know the journey it would take to get me there. Least of all did I see the prize to be had through the journey; an identity safe in His love, not just head knowledge but now realized more fully in my heart and serving as an invitation to others to taste and see His goodness (Psalm 34).

For Further Reading

Article by Henri Nouwen, *From Solitude to Community to Ministry* from [Solitude to Community to Ministry](#) | [CT Pastors](#) | [Christianity Today](#)



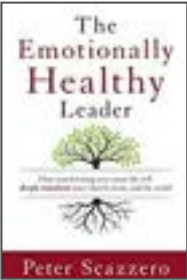
Expectations and Burnout: Women Surviving the Great Commission by Sue Eenigenburg and Robynn Bliss

Missionaries often have high expectations of themselves, their mission agencies, host cultures, churches, co-workers, and even of God—expectations that can lead to mental and physical exhaustion. This book shares how burnout can happen and how God can bring life from ashes.



From Burned out to Beloved: Soul Care for Wounded Healers
by Bethany Dearborn Hiser

Trauma affects everyone exposed to it—not only those experiencing it firsthand. The author learned firsthand that she needed the very soul care she provided to others. This book is a soul care guide for all Christians working in high-stress, helping professions.



The Emotionally Healthy Leader: How Transforming Your Inner Life Will Deeply Transform Your Church, Team, and the World
by Peter Scazzero

This book exemplifies the qualities we see in our strongest and longest-lasting leaders and covers many other topics like Identity, conflict, etc.

Chapter 3

A Journey Toward Understanding Suffering

by Marion Dicke

Like many international workers (IWs), I did not embark on my journey with a well-developed theology of suffering. Rather, it has evolved over the years and continues to grow and change. Walking through my own painful experiences, accompanying others on their journey through suffering, wrestling through Scriptures, and ultimately surrendering to a God whose mysterious ways and purposes cannot be fully explained have all been part of the process.

I grew up reading missionary biographies. The ones which inspired my young heart and soul contained descriptions from the worker facing great difficulties and seemingly insurmountable obstacles, ultimately triumphing over them. The stories of pioneer workers martyred for their faith also gripped my heart deeply but left me with many unanswered questions that surfaced from time to time.

As I prepared to go to the Democratic Republic of Congo (then Zaire) as a nurse-midwife on an established field, I reasoned the danger of persecution or contracting a severe illness was much less likely than in years past. Nevertheless, I anticipated struggles as I adapted to the culture, language learning, and medical conditions where my nursing skills and limited experience would be tested to the limit.

At the time, my theology of suffering went something like this: If I am obedient to God's call on my life, I can trust Him to protect my loved ones and me and to keep me safe. I can also count on His supernatural power at work in my weakness to help me surmount the challenges and difficulties.

My father's sudden death due to a farm accident shortly before I went overseas brought my core belief into question as I was suddenly plunged into grief without warning and preparation. Wrestling through the pain and sorrow of

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such a significant loss was my most profound experience of suffering at the time.

Working in a medical capacity in lower Congo brought me face to face with additional levels of suffering I had never encountered before. Due to diseases that could have been prevented with earlier treatment or more access to resources, children's high mortality rates were heartbreaking. Seeing parents struggle to raise their children and earn an adequate living in the face of so many odds was also very difficult. The contrast between life as I had known it growing up in Canada and life experienced by many of my Congolese friends was great. I was significantly impacted by the resilience and strength many of my Congolese Christian friends faced in their trials. Their attitude to suffering was so much more robust than my own. While I registered this fact on a cognitive level, my primary response was to work harder and to do all in my power to alleviate suffering.

When HIV/AIDS started to rear its head among the patients we treated or among the women who delivered their babies at our hospital, the questions of our medical staff's personal safety became more of a concern. Much about the disease was still unknown, and because its presumed origin had some links back to Congo, there was a stigma surrounding it. Many people either denied its existence or tried at all costs to hide their symptoms. Friends and family back home constantly asked about my health. One friend made me a beautiful cross-stitch picture depicting God's protection based on Psalm 91. Another friend gave me a poster with the words of that psalm, which hung in a prominent place in my home. I clung to the beautiful imagery and powerful promises of protection for the one who rests in the shelter of the Almighty.

Going Deeper

As I fast forward a few years, I was asked to be part of a team to work with an unreached people group closer to the capital city of Kinshasa; a group historically resistant to any outside influence over the past decades. Now, some mission organizations had begun to travel in the region, sharing the story of Jesus. Small fledgling churches began to spring up, and new believers were being disciplined. With the recognition of the region's high infant and maternal mortality rates and the difficult access to medical resources and clean water, village leaders were asking for some input and resources from mission organizations to address these needs. Barb Ihrke and I, both nurses, were asked to join the Hotalens, newly arrived American workers and a team of about fifteen Congolese missionaries and pastors. Our role was to help develop community health initiatives, reach out to the Bateke women, and help equip newly emerging church leaders.

I accepted this invitation with both excitement and trepidation, clearly sensing God's leading in this new venture. What a joy it was to be part of a cross-cultural team, united in our desire to be the hands and feet of Jesus. However, I was totally unprepared for the hardships as we went into territory where the Enemy had held sway for so many years. Spiritual opposition was palpable as we would drive into some villages and see the degree of bondage many lived under. Sorcery and witchcraft were rampant. The harsh conditions under which some of my teammates lived took their toll. Several of my teammates lost children, sometimes due to lack of medical resources and sometimes from unexplained causes. A couple of my teammates also developed chronic and debilitating illnesses.

However, I was totally unprepared for the hardships as we went into territory where the Enemy had held sway for so many years.

And then came the event even more challenging to accept or understand. My teammate Anne and I travelled out one day to a nearby village to do a ladies' retreat with one of the Congolese pastor's wives. Upon entering the village, we found the pastor's house surrounded by people and the whole village in mourning. The same day, word had arrived of the pastor's body being discovered in a ditch close to a major roadway. As the story was later pieced together, it became apparent he had been shot and killed by soldiers who patrolled the road. He had been on his way home from an evangelistic trip, carrying some Bibles and his notes in a briefcase. The soldiers stopped him, believing he had money in the briefcase. When they realized their mistake, they shot him and threw him and his briefcase into a nearby ditch. It all seemed so senseless and unbelievable. Gaston was our most experienced and zealous evangelist, a beloved mentor and friend to all of us on the team.

Our plans to meet with the women were cancelled, and instead, we went with the pastor's wife to identify her husband's body and bring him back for burial. In the process of doing this, we had a very hostile encounter with soldiers, possibly the very ones who had taken Gaston's life. I remember the sense of outrage and, yes, even hatred welling up in my heart toward these men. It all seemed so senseless, and I realized my view of suffering did not include a scenario where God would allow such evil to prevail in the life of one of His most faithful servants. Maybe, I reasoned, we were somehow at fault because we had not operated with enough prayer coverage. And yet, even as I thought those thoughts, the voice of God reminded me He had allowed His only Son to endure an agonizing death. It

was just a day or two before Good Friday and the reality of Christ's suffering, with the Father's full permission, struck me forcefully.

During the Easter holidays, I went back to Psalm 91, my favourite psalm. In fact, I had a message to prepare on one of the names of God for a retreat for our team members. Our North American missionary team profoundly met God when we had been together a couple of years earlier and had studied the names of God under the teaching of Dave Petrescue. One of the names stood out to me then, and I was preparing to speak on God Most High, the name mentioned in Psalm 91.

As I studied Scripture and the context of the name, I slowly surrendered to the sovereignty of God, who sits high and lifted up above the world yet dwells so powerfully among us, caring for us and allowing nothing to touch us, which has not first passed through His hand. There were no satisfactory answers as to why this particular event happened, but perhaps a beginning of the realization of God's ultimate purpose to conform us more and more to the image of His Son. I may not choose or like the circumstances involved in the transformation, but I asked myself, can I trust those circumstances to a loving God, a God who is good all the time?

Might Suffering Be a Big Part of the Message?

Around this time, I also began exploring the role of suffering in piercing through the darkness where the light of the message of Jesus has not yet penetrated. There is no doubt the Enemy does not want to give up territory he has presumed to be his for so long. I thought of the quote I had heard when studying church history, a paraphrase attributed to Tertullian in 197 AD, "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church." Many have linked the quote with the passage in John 12:24, "Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds."

Throughout church history there are multiple accounts of spiritual breakthroughs following persecution. Yet there are other times, as in the early Church in Acts when God pours His Spirit out on believers, and many come to know Him in great numbers. Other times the breakthrough appears to come after much prayer and fasting without the loss of life.

As I thought of the suffering endured by so many people who live among and work with unreached people groups or in hostile environments, I began to wonder if suffering was somehow an integral part of the message itself. We proclaim a Christ who willingly suffered on behalf of mankind to obtain their salvation. We are invited to participate in Christ's suffering. Is there something in the manner

we as message bearers respond to suffering that engages the attention and curiosity of those to whom we minister? Does Christ become more visible as we demonstrate perseverance, love, and grace through our suffering?

These thoughts and questions are not original ones, but ones that various authors and speakers on the topic of suffering have alluded to, as

demonstrated by the life of the Apostle Paul and other followers of Christ. Perhaps again, another part of the mystery of God's plan and purposes is in suffering.

Is there something in the manner we as message bearers respond to suffering that engages the attention and curiosity of those to whom we minister?

Going Even Deeper

The events which happened to me in Congo were part of the catalyst God used to move me to a ministry of Member Care to international workers across West Africa. As a result, I became part of the Mobile Member Care Team based in Abidjan, Republic of Ivory Coast (RCI), to equip and come alongside workers in the midst of trauma.

An early workshop we developed was to equip peer responders and leaders to come alongside their colleagues in times of crisis and suffering. One of the modules was *Developing a Theology of Suffering*. This module was birthed out of the realization the more we, as caregivers, have intentionally wrestled through our own suffering, the better equipped we would be to come alongside others.

My assignment was to develop a module providing tools for caregivers and mission leaders to develop their own theology of suffering. I spent time pouring through Scripture and reading various authors on the topic. One book, in particular, had a profound impact—*When God Weeps*, written by Joni Erickson in the years following the diving accident which changed the trajectory of her life. The book's theme is that God is not only with us in suffering but that He suffers with us. Her probing questions surrounding suffering prompted me to develop some key questions on suffering we would wrestle through with Scripture during our workshop. Questions such as, "What is the origin of suffering? To what degree is suffering an anticipated event in the believer's life? What role does suffering play in our lives? What is the fruit of suffering? What does God promise us/not promise us in the face of suffering?"

Joni's book also underlined how our view of God and His character dramatically

influences how we experience and respond to suffering. A developing theology of suffering would include a thoughtful examination of our own core beliefs of God. Another piece of the theology would be to acknowledge the gap between our cultural beliefs of suffering and a biblical view, examining which areas need to be aligned more closely to Scripture. (See [Theology of Suffering](#) guide in the Appendix).

A couple of years later, I was again plunged into circumstances that brought my theology of suffering to the forefront. Our team was in a northern city in Côte d'Ivoire doing a workshop when gunfire during the night alerted us civil war had suddenly broken out. Our guest house complex was located between rebel and government forces. For eight days, the sound of heavy artillery surrounded us as we hunkered down in our building. Those days were filled with anxious moments punctuated by so many miraculous provisions, including an adequate food and water supply, one phone line to the outside world remaining open, and protection against heavy gunfire. Eventually, the city was secured, and we were escorted to safety.

The most challenging part for me, though, was after we came back to the city of Abidjan, where we lived and had set up our office. We chose the city primarily because of its stability and good access to the surrounding countries we served. In addition, several of the mission leaders who were part of our board also lived in RCI.

The workshops we had prepared to equip mission leaders and peer responders were up and running as we travelled across West Africa. A few months earlier, I read Psalm 84, and I felt the Spirit of God nudging me as I read verses 5 to 7. Verse 5 talks about the blessing there is for those whose strength is in the Lord and who have set their heart on the journey. Verse 7 says, "They go from strength to strength till each appears before God in Zion." I loved the picture and promise of strength; it felt like God was so at work in those early days as a team.

However, it became apparent that Abidjan would no longer be a suitable home base as the civil war continued. We would have to find another country, another home, and while we did this, our ministry would be on hold. In the months following this incident, we waited on God for the next steps and eventually moved to the neighbouring country of Ghana. We combed the streets of Accra looking for a new residence/office and finally found a fixer-upper house we felt would work. After several weeks of getting the house repaired, we moved in.

Unfortunately, the first night in our new home, we experienced a robbery and a significant sum of money from my teammate's briefcase was stolen. It was not the new beginning we had expected. *Where was the strength He had promised*, I wondered? Why did I feel so weary? Again, the Lord took me back to Psalms 84: 5-7. This time verse 6 leapt off the page. "As they pass through the Valley of Baka

(often translated as the *Valley of Weeping*), they make it a place of springs, the autumn rains also cover it with pools.” How had I not seen this part of the passage earlier? I realized, on so many levels I was now in my own valley of weeping.

During the following months, I heard three separate messages on the Valley of Baka, reinforcing the Lord’s provision and His presence even through the difficult times. The months I stayed in the Valley of Baka were some of the most difficult and the most transformative I had ever experienced. God gave me new insights about Himself as I spent more time in solitude, new priorities in ministry, and a renewed sense of dependency and trust in His purposes. Another chapter in the development of my theology of suffering was being written.

Coming Alongside Others who are Suffering

It has become increasingly evident that while God is so present in suffering, His purposes and plans for each of us who suffer are unique. Therefore, as a caregiver to those going through difficult times, I need to trust His work and timing in their lives. It is not my job to quickly pluck them out of the valley of suffering or to try and ‘fix’ them. They do not need, at the time, to hear my thesis on suffering and how I have developed it. Instead, they need someone comfortable and available to come alongside and sit with them in the valley, trusting God is the One who will administer healing, comfort, and grace to walk through.

Pat Russell, as quoted by Scott Shaum in his chapter from the book, *Trauma & Resilience*, sums it up nicely: “Suffering is not a question that demands an answer. It is not a problem that demands a solution. Suffering is a mystery that demands a presence” (p. 15). This is not to say God will not use, at the appropriate time, a listening ear, a Scripture, a song, a suggestion of a book to read. However, what will speak loudest will be my non-judgmental, enduring presence with the one who is suffering, presence mirroring God’s posture toward them at such a critical time. I have come to see the journey of accompanying someone else in their suffering is one of the most sacred privileges we are given.

Suffering: A Lifelong Experience

I do not think we ever get to the point of a completed theology of suffering. One of the people who has been instrumental in my ongoing journey has been Scott Shaum with Barnabas International. I was privileged to hear him speak on the topic at the Mental Health and Missions and Pastor to Missionaries Conferences. I have also read some of his writings. Shaum shares from his own experiences

of suffering and extensive search of Scripture. He mentions how broadly the term suffering is used in Scripture to describe all kinds of afflictions, adverse circumstances, and trials that come our way. His definition of suffering then is “any experience that causes internal or external duress physically, emotionally, spiritually and relationally” (*Trauma & Resilience*, p. 6).

The loss of my sister to cancer after a valiant fight and the ever-present hope that healing was in sight brought up fresh awareness of the complexity of suffering. Watching my ninety-four-year-old mother, who had so faithfully served God over her lifetime, deteriorate mentally and physically in her final two years of life was another situation to wrestle through. What purpose was there in her suffering? Did she not deserve to be cut free of her pain and be with the God she so desired to meet? How was God’s promise of His presence manifest in the midst of her confusion and helplessness?

During the past couple of years, my theology of suffering has again been challenged and enlarged as we go through a global pandemic. If we accept the definition quoted earlier saying suffering is whatever causes us duress on the physical, emotional, spiritual, or relational level, then dealing with the impact of Covid-19 clearly fits into one or more of those categories. I have found myself asking questions such as, “Where are you, God, in the midst of this pandemic? What are the opportunities You want Your followers to embrace? How do we as believers respect one another, care for one another, and encourage one another when there have been so many different responses and divisions within the Body of Christ? How do we persevere with courage and grace when the end is still so uncertain?”

There is so much I still do not understand about suffering. I know some of my questions will remain unanswered. The mystery inherent in suffering will not be fully revealed on this earth. But I am confident the God of all comfort who comforts us in our grief and uses our own losses and sorrows to comfort others will continue to reveal Himself through suffering. He will continue to be with us and suffer with us in every difficult circumstance.

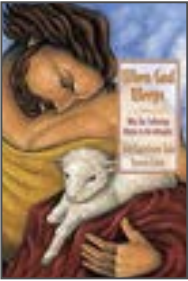


For Further Reading

Trauma & Resilience by Frauke Schaefer and Charles Schaefer.

This book brings together theological perspectives, personal stories, and spiritual, psychological, community, and medical resources. It is research-based and, at the same time, practical. This handbook is for church and mission leaders, peer supporters, counsellors, those in personnel and member

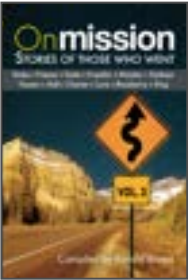
care roles, as well as those who suffer. It is also an excellent resource for training courses about this topic.



When God Weeps: Why Our Suffering Matters to the Almighty

by Joni Eareckson Tada and Steve Estes

In the midst of suffering, we often question the very foundation of our faith—our belief in the God who says He loves us. Since our trust and obedience rest on God’s character, the questions that life’s tragedies force us to face are difficult, even frightening. The book’s theme is that God is not only with us in suffering but that He suffers with us.



ON MISSION: Stories of Those Who Went, Vol. 3

compiled by Ronald Brown

In Chapter 1 entitled, “Caring for the Body, Healing for the Soul,” Marion Dicke tells of her life on the mission field and how she became involved with Mobile Member Care.

Chapter 4

Preparing Cross-Cultural Workers

by Harvey Matchullis

This chapter on training and development is written mainly in the context of a person being supported and sent by an agency or local church. Inherent in the model, a candidate fulfills training and development requirements to join the agency and their international work.

Why Prepare People for Cross-Cultural Service?

Why not just send the called and the passionate? If a person loves Christ and is called and willing to sacrifice and go, should there be any further barriers or requirements put in the way? Think back to Christ's disciples. They eventually became world changers. However, from the beginning, they were not exactly the pick of the lot and were even a bit dull during their training period. But in the end, they did alright, didn't they?

Think back to the centuries of Christian growth before the advent of the mission agency proper about two hundred years ago. People essentially went out on their own in the natural flow of life and vocation and carried the life and word of Christ with them around the world. The Gospel did not need a mission agency with hoops and requirements for all those centuries. What's different now? Why don't mission agencies send people based on Christ's calling and passion alone?

It's a good question, one I and many others who recruit, train, and develop workers have faced. In the ultimate irony, I am now the candidate development director for an organization to which I asked all those same questions. At age twenty-three, I wrote a letter to the then VP of Missions for The Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada (now known as The Alliance Canada). I stated the time it takes to get through all their hoops—a bachelor's degree in theology or Missions, two years of working in a church, and then another year of Masters' level training with a specific missiological focus—a minimum of seven years! I could have become a medical doctor in the same amount of time, with a much better salary! So why is the path to being a missionary as long as a physician's?

How the vice president responded is what I have now come to know:

- The process develops character and maturity, which often only occurs via time and experience. Life itself is a great teacher.
- The person's motivations and call are tested and, hopefully, strengthened.
- The reality is, calling and passion are not enough. My wife debriefs international workers from multiple organizations and observes the tragic consequences of sending based on passion and calling but without proper preparation and support. As a result, lives and beliefs are often shattered.
- It is a worthy endeavour to be prepared, experienced, and competent before entering another culture. Bringing your 'best self' honours those people and glorifies Christ. Another culture and people group are not a playground for spiritual adventure, nor is it a laboratory to fulfill a person's passions. We send ambassadors of the King, makers of disciples of Christ.

The reality is,
calling and passion
are not enough.

In our contemporary global context, there are other factors at play that informs, even demands, proper screening and preparation:

- It is no surprise to any agency or church, but sending and sustaining a resident worker is increasingly expensive. Good stewardship back to a church and donor base means selecting and preparing people who can be effective and have lasting power.
- The need for identifying and developing competent and resilient workers has never been higher given the multiple levels of risk (family, health, politics, etc.) they will encounter.
- Globalization makes it easy to travel, but protectionism makes it difficult to stay. Many countries now restrict who can enter and often require special education or skills before granting visas.
- Thankfully the global church is sending, not just the West. This means that we often work alongside partners where a specific role or niche needs to be fulfilled. So there is a movement from generalist to specialist roles.

The Alliance Canada has a history of long processes, not because we want to make it hard, but because we know the work of cross-cultural adaptation and contribution as a representative of the Kingdom of God has a unique set of responsibilities:

- 1. To the King.** A workers' life speaks of Christ's life – in totality. How they 'show up' in words, in living, and in actions will either be an accurate representation, or they will be representing something or someone else. That's a significant role to carry. It's what an ambassador does.

- 2. To the world.** How others experience the worker is the primary lens through which they will see the validity of the Jesus Way and whether it's worth joining His community. When people look at, hear, watch, and interact with a worker, they decide if this alternate way of life is good and worth following.¹
- 3. To the local churches supporting the workers.** The agency sends people on behalf of local churches. They would not have the role if the church and its people did not give and pray. Period. In what may feel unspiritual terms, the worker has an employer—the church—who expects them to do a job and do it well.

What Constitutes Proper Preparation?

King David is said to have cared for his people with a true heart of integrity and led them with skillful hands (Psalm 78:72). Compassion, calling, and conviction are foundational, but building something enduring and sustainable takes skill and competency. So how do we do that?

Missionary training has evolved in positive ways from fixed sets of knowledge and skill requirements to more curated approaches. This has come about because of the increasingly complex world these servants are sent into. It is also a good example of applying the adult learning theory principle of 'get what you need and use what you get' to our training. Excellent training resources such as [Grow 2 Serve](#), which brings together multiple training partners in an online education community, have emerged from this need and reality².

However, with the positive effort to make skills and knowledge training more accessible and targeted, how do we ensure someone has the competency to use their training well? This chapter will look at the personal and organizational commitment to developing core competencies we in The Alliance Canada have found to be characteristic of our most effective international workers.

Defining the terms around competency

Simply put, competencies are the observable behaviours that enable a person to do a job effectively.

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- All of our life needs to be all in, best captured in this quote from Jim Elliot, a Christian missionary martyr, Ecuador, 1956: "Wherever you are, be all there! Live to the hilt every situation you believe to be the will of God."
 - [William Carey Publishing](#) is also a great place to start to locate books and materials related to missionary training and development.

Training courses, degrees, and even experiences are not competencies. Instead, they are the means, the raw material for competence in something.

Skills are specific learned activities that enable us to know what a person can actually do. Skills give us the ‘what,’ telling us what abilities a person has or needs to perform a job. They can also be further developed.

On the other hand, *competencies* take skills and training and incorporate them into on-the-job behaviours. Competencies are skills and training with boots on.

Competencies are skills and training with boots on.

Those behaviours demonstrate the ability to perform the job/ministry requirements effectively in a wide variety of situations. Why is this important? Because we do not deploy factory workers and widget-makers, but people who are self-initiators, creators, pioneers, partners, and collaborators.

Placing our focus on identifying and developing competencies helps us as agencies to:

- Ensure our people *demonstrate* the appropriate expertise/skills/character needed for the ministry they are employed to do. What is on a resumé is not necessarily the same as what a person is actually able to do.
- Recruit, select, and develop new staff more effectively. Clearly defined competencies function to weed out tire kickers and attract the right people. It’s not just about calling and heart. Can you do the job? Do you demonstrate the behavioural orientation which makes for an effective worker? Do you aspire to act in this manner?
- Evaluate performance. Many mission organizations are not proficient at evaluation. We are often just so glad we have someone there. However, when we do evaluate, it has to be against an articulated set of expectations and not just subjective judgement. Competencies are defined in behavioural terms, which can be evaluated and then further developed.
- Identify skill and competency gaps to be addressed pre- and post-deployment. For example, a person can indicate they have a gift for discipling or evangelism. We can see it on their resumé or via our assessments. How well do they demonstrate that gift? Do they need more training, more practice? The continuum of behaviour outlined in our *Competency Rubric*, imperfect as it is, provides a starting point for us and a candidate to ask how their gifts and skills are ‘showing up’ in behavioural/action terms.
- Develop a measure of standardization that can be used to meet higher agency goals. Standardization cannot be about training or skills because

every agency, every team, and every context requires unique and varied roles. For our organization, the more complete way of approaching this was to:

- Define common behaviours (competencies) we seek to see demonstrated by all in the global missionary team.
- Link these competencies to the higher values of our Mission.

Thus, as individuals develop in these areas, they share in a team-wide standard. Moreover, having a defined set of competencies shows workers the behaviours we value, which will help us achieve our global objectives.

Developing the Competency Rubric

We started this process in 2019 by asking ourselves the question, “What are the key characteristics of our most effective workers?” We also asked the converse question, “What characterizes our ineffective workers? From this eye-opening process, we distilled the dozens of characteristics identified in our effective workers into ten competencies we assessed as core to all workers. From these, we have developed a coaching process to enable our candidates to begin working to build these behaviours into their life and training.

What are the key characteristics of our most effective workers?

The “[GM Competency Rubric](#)” (GM = Global Ministries) found in the Appendix condenses our research and reflection into a rubric we now use to guide pre-field and on-field development. This does not replace the professional and/or ministry training required for the work to be done. Knowledge and skills remain important areas to assess when developing candidates. Core competencies provide a framework for developing people across a broad range of behaviours we know will strengthen the knowledge and skills they already have in their hands. Note that we have attempted to describe the expression of the behaviour along a continuum so the candidate/worker can self-evaluate where they show strengths and needs for further growth.

The Outcome: 10 Core Competencies

Here’s a broad level look at the competencies, described as behaviour statements, and a further description of what it would look like if the worker was proficient at demonstrating this competency:

- 1. Personal prayer.** *Effective workers have active prayer disciplines.* They have identifiable practices of communion with God making prayer a 'natural habit.' Rather than relying on old stories to sustain them, they are experiencing fresh encounters with Christ and growth in various aspects of daily life.
- 2. Intercessory prayer.** *Effective workers involve others as prayer partners in their ministry.* They see the world as one influenced by spiritual forces. Thus, they not only understand spiritual warfare but engage in prayer accordingly. However, they never go alone, consistently engaging with an intercessory prayer team.
- 3. Mature Soul.** *Effective workers are focused on developing a whole person's maturity of heart, mind, soul, and strength* (Mark 12:30). They do this by consistently integrating acquired Scripture knowledge into daily practice and living accountable to regular spiritual and life disciplines. Additionally, they offer grace and wisdom to others on the negotiables of faith and practice (dogmatism vs. seeking guidance from the Holy Spirit for the situation) and integrate the exercise of faith into all aspects of life, demonstrating there is no sacred/secular divide to Kingdom living.
- 4. Personal leadership.** *Effective workers demonstrate active habits of self-leadership and personal growth.* They proactively develop and practice habits promoting healthy work/life rhythms. These workers also function with a high level of self-awareness and emotional intelligence in their relationships.
- 5. Cultural Intelligence.** *Effective workers demonstrate intercultural and least-reached acumen.* They proactively implement strategies for their integration into local culture. This includes embracing people from other cultures into their social circle. People are not approached as 'targets' or 'projects' but are treated as fellow humans and friends.
- 6. Disciple-Making.** *Effective workers see all their relationships as opportunities for active disciple-making.* They can describe the number and nature of their discipling relationships. Spiritual conversations are regular and recent. They consistently demonstrate to others what it looks like to obey and trust in Jesus.
- 7. Faith Community Engagement.** *Effective workers have the ability to build Christian community,* and in particular, rather than importing a model, they actively participate in, coach, and develop a contextual Christian community.
- 8. Team Participant.** *Effective workers demonstrate the capacity to work*

and/or lead in a team. This is their second transformation after the cross-cultural one. They strengthen the teams' mission through active contributions based on their personal and team strengths. They also possess and exercise a healthy conflict resolution strategy.

9. **Cooperative Capacity.** *Effective workers engage the capacity of others outside the organization to achieve mission goals.* The Kingdom is God's; therefore, they seek out partnerships for the sake of good stewardship and increased impact.
10. **Active Communication.** *Effective workers involve corporate (e.g., church) and individual partners through meaningful communication.* They regularly report mission-critical information to an identified support base of individuals and churches.

Developing the Competencies in Candidates

Our approach to developing competencies is to create a collaboration between our agency, the candidate, and their local church leadership. If the local church prefers, we will identify a mission mentor to work with the candidate. The process is designed to be self-generating and straightforward:

- The local church/mentor and the candidate work jointly to identify two or three competencies for development. We suggest this number because no one can successfully work on ten things at a time.
- They then decide on the type of activity or experience to help develop the competency. We provide a list of suggested competency development activities to help spark their brainstorming. However, to develop the candidate's self-awareness and personal leadership, we do not insist on how they should develop the competency but give them autonomy to choose their strategy for development.
- A plan with check-ins on progress is developed between the candidate and mentor.
- At the check-in, and depending on progress, they can move on to a deeper phase of developing that competency or work on a new one.
- The reality is no one is ever 'done.' We are always in development, meaning the development of competencies is then carried over once they become workers.

Jesus moved into the neighbourhood (see John 1:14 MSG). So we follow Him by doing the same thing, wherever that may be, near or far. In that neighbourhood, competent missionaries can live. They may be employed locally or run a business;

they may be supported financially by a charity or sending agency or church. But there in that neighbourhood, they carry out the Great Commission; they are salt and light, they have joined God in His mission to bring Good News to all people groups in the world.

Chapter 5

Developing A Theology of Risk

by Ronald Brown

Is persecution good for the Church? For example, there is much political and ethnic turmoil throughout Africa these days. The family of God is sometimes caught at opposite ends of the discussions and tensions. Hutu and Tutsi believers in Rwanda are an example of Christian family members being divided by ethnicity. Baoulé and Bambara Christians would be an example in Côte d'Ivoire.

Times of ethnic and religious tensions should provide the opportunity for God's people to demonstrate how the love of Christ transcends ethnic lines; however, this does not always happen. Believers suffer, and some are jailed.

Missionaries put themselves at risk for multiple reasons and with varying motives. Risk as a verb is defined as "to expose to hazard or danger" (Mish 1987). A theology of risk establishes a scriptural understanding for bearing witness and discipling nations in the midst of hazardous or dangerous settings. Some workers believe God is calling them to stay in a risky situation and are prepared to die, citing that the safest place is in the centre of God's will. Others remain due to faulty analysis of their dangerous situation and a tendency to downplay the threat. If they have already gone through similar circumstances, they become like the "frog in the kettle," gradually accepting the risk as normal. Some simply do not decide to leave; they stay too long and become casualties. For others, the danger aspect puts stress on what Hill calls psychological fault lines. They think, "I must stay to prove my faith, obedience, and courage." Others stay to prove their love for the nationals. In these last two instances, the decision is often more about the missionaries and their needs than the church or the call (Hill 2000, p. 339).

A theology of risk establishes a scriptural understanding for bearing witness and discipling nations in the midst of hazardous or dangerous settings.

As mission team leaders and member care providers for international workers

in today's troublesome global context, we need a growing understanding of a theology of risk. We are also working at a time when society has a preoccupation with safety. Note how many instructions when travelling or commercials we watch that include the words "for your safety" or "your safety is our primary concern."

Providing member care for workers is most effective in the context of a full ever-broadening understanding of the theology of risk. This understanding, however, is not complete without an appreciation of how workers each have their own unique grasp of this theology. Some have what might be called a "textbook" understanding. They have thought this through, searched Scriptures, and have perhaps even sought out anecdotal support for their developing understanding of what God says about taking risks for the sake of increasing His Kingdom. Others have never given the theology of risk a passing or personal thought. This essay attempts to shed light on the various aspects of the theology of risk and to help member care providers navigate within scriptural teachings on the subject.

Larry Postman cautions us not to glorify suffering in and of itself and warns we should not look for risky situations so we might suffer more (Postman 2001, p. 94). We are not to take delight in pain or the suffering of others. Jesus is a healer and was very much involved in a healing ministry, relieving suffering while on earth. We understand His great compassion for those in affliction. At the same time, we know suffering contributes to our spiritual growth, "If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him..." (2 Timothy 2:12 KJV¹).

On the positive side, Postman speaks of some of the benefits we can capitalize on in times of chaos. "Living in the midst of anarchic, insecure situations can have the effect of paring away the layers of 'security' in which the modern world enfolds us" (Postman 2000, p. 95). Kaplan juxtaposes the idea; "people find liberation in violence . . . worrying about mines and ambushes frees you from worrying about mundane details of daily existence" (Kaplan 2000, p. 45).

Understanding the role of suffering in the believer's life, the present-day cross-cultural worker should not recoil from risky situations as found in political, social, or economic chaos. Missionary candidates "should instead be instilled with a 'survivalist' mentality which will acknowledge the very real possibility of physical and mental suffering in the midst of missionary ministry and be prepared to deal with on a day by day, even hour by hour, basis" (Postman 2000, p. 95).

Discovering biblical principles for working in risky contexts is necessary, now more than ever, because while the Great Commission and the Great Commandment have not changed, the world has changed. As a result, Christians

1. King James Version (KJV). Public Domain.

find themselves needing to move into harm's way to love their neighbours and disciple them in the ways of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In this chapter, we seek to develop a theology of risk by first looking at the second portion of Hebrews 11 and then looking at the life of Jesus and some of the apostles as they dealt with risk.

The "Others" of Hebrews 11:35

In the well-known eleventh chapter of Hebrews, we read of great men and women of faith. It is an inspiring chapter. The first thirty-five verses challenge us in our walk with God as people of faith. The second part of verse 35 takes a sombre turn to talk about "others," presumably also people of faith, for whom things did not turn out so well. They were caught in much suffering. Some did not survive; some died brutal deaths. F.F. Bruce observes, "Faith in God carries with it no guarantee of comfort in this world: this was no doubt one of the lessons which our author wished his readers to learn. But it does carry with it great reward in the only world that ultimately matters" (Bruce 1990, p. 329).

Biblical examples illustrate for us how things did not always go well and how there was room to question where God was at these moments. Consider Moses (Deuteronomy 32:48-52), who came to the end of his life after a career of leading the people of God. God told him to go up Mount Nebo and gaze on the Promised Land. This was the destination and the goal that had been in front of Moses for a very long time. Yet, God told Moses he would never set foot there. He would die and be buried on this side of the Promised Land. The dream for him was never consummated. Commentator Earl Kalland muses, "Did ever exuberance of satisfaction, promise, and victory mix with disappointment and pathos more dramatically" (Gaebelein 1992, p. 217)?

Scripture is silent on what Moses was thinking or what he might have said. One can only put themselves into his robes and try to imagine some serious questions about God and His concept of reward for faithful service. Might Moses not be thinking of how deserving he was after all he had done? "I've lived my whole life serving you through thick and thin, and this is it; no 'well done' at the end of my life?" This question hangs unanswered.

Think of Jeremiah, who was called by God to service while still in his mother's womb. Yet, he faced horrible suffering as he faithfully went about his prophetic duties. He could well have wondered where God was when he was placed in stocks (Jeremiah 20:2) and left all night in what must have been a distorted bodily position. When he was beaten and again put in prison (Jeremiah 37:15),

one wonders what his thoughts about God were during those lonely hours. This dungeon with several feet of mud (Jeremiah 38:6-13) was where his enemies left him to die. It certainly would also have been a place to ask, "Why me, Lord?" Jeremiah qualifies to be included with "the others" of Hebrews chapter 11, for whom life did not turn out well.

Then there is Jesus, the Son of God, in the garden, thinking about what was ahead of Him. "'Abba, Father,' he said, 'everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will'" (Mark 14:36). Deep within, He struggled. His commitment to doing God's will was strong. Naturally, He would not have chosen to suffer. If the goal could have been accomplished another way, He would prefer that way. Filmmaker Mel Gibson graphically portrayed for the world the physical suffering Jesus endured. Was the more tremendous suffering not the momentary spiritual separation from God? "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me" (Mark 15:34)?

Moses, Jeremiah, and Jesus are biblical leaders with challenging assignments which included trauma and suffering. However, while the trauma of Moses was a psychological trauma of disappointment and misunderstanding, the trauma of Jeremiah and Jesus was physical as they carried out the Father's will.

Risk-Taking in the Life of Jesus

Webster's dictionary defines risk as a "possibility of loss or injury" (Mish 1987, p. 1018). There are numerous occasions when Jesus was faced with this possibility. For example, in Matthew 2, Herod intended to wipe out any potential rival king and requested the wise men to report back to him the location of the divine Child. The keeper God spoke twice using a dream to protect baby Jesus. First, He told the wisemen to depart via a different route. Then He told Joseph to take Jesus to Africa and seek refuge there until further word. The sad consequence of these actions was Herod's anger at being outwitted, resulting in the killing of all male children under two years of age in the Bethlehem region. God could have protected His only begotten Son in Bethlehem; however, escape was the method He chose to protect Jesus in this situation.

Years later, Jesus as a grown man, found Himself in discussion with the Pharisees (Luke 4:24:30). The consequence of His words infuriated His audience; they physically attacked Jesus taking Him to the edge of town, intent on pushing Him over a cliff. The possibility of loss or injury was significant. Yet, Jesus did not shy away from speaking the truth, knowing confrontation was inevitable. The keeper God could have performed a spectacular miracle. Though hard to understand,

the smaller miracle was how Jesus just slipped away through the crowd and left them (Luke 4:30). Did God use a restraining power to keep the mob from grabbing Jesus? God did not do this back at the synagogue, where they were not restrained from manhandling Jesus.

On another occasion, the Pharisees were angered by Jesus (Matthew 12:14-16; Mark 3:6-7). Jesus learned of their plot to kill Him. He was definitely at risk and left the area. There was no apparent divine intervention; instead, human precaution guided the actions of Jesus. He was at risk, and He did the wise thing.

Reacting to “friendly fire,” in contrast to opposing forces (John 6:15), Jesus read a risky situation, saw the potential for injury, and then withdrew to the hills, a place of solitude and renewal. Violence was not to be His method for Kingdom progress. No divine intervention was observed. Later, when something He said was construed as blasphemous (John 8:58-59), stones were picked up with which to stone Him. Again, a risky situation arose, and Jesus slipped away from the temple grounds. Again, He took the risk to proclaim truth, which provoked a dangerous reaction.

In John 10:31-40, we find another stoning was pending. When Jesus claimed to be the Son of God and continued to risk speaking the truth, they tried to arrest Him. He evaded this by slipping away towards the river. However, active plotting of death by authorities (John 11:45-54) brought Jesus once more into a risky situation. His response was to withdraw to a desert region and cease His public ministry.

The triumphal entry into Jerusalem marked the end of Jesus operating on the perimeter. He moved to centre stage. It was “the beginning of the end” (Matthew 21-23). He deliberately positioned Himself as Messiah. He showed His aggressive side by cleaning out the temple, which brought Him again into a position of risk and confrontation with the authorities. He knew His death and resurrection were on His path as part of God’s redemptive plan. Later, when Peter pulled out his sword in a defensive posture, Jesus told him to put it away (Matthew 26:52-54). There was no divine intervention. Jesus stated He could have called for help, He could have again slipped through the crowd, but instead, He chose not to so Scripture might be fulfilled.

Risk-Taking in the Life of the Apostles

As the story of Christ’s death and resurrection was told, the lives of the messengers were placed at risk. The result was some came into harm’s way, and their lives were threatened. There does not seem to be a consistent pattern in their ministry. At times, certain precautions were evident. At times, there was

divine intervention, and at other times there was not.

In Acts 4, some were disturbed that Peter and John claimed a resurrection from the dead. Consequently, they were arrested and jailed, as there was no immediate divine intervention. Yet, some five thousand men responded to their message because of their risk-taking, proclamation, and willingness to face the risk to proclaim. The divine intervention, in this case, came the following morning when Peter was filled with God's Spirit and empowered to boldly give a reason for the hope inside of him to a select group of leaders and elders of the nation. Had Peter and John not been jailed, they might not have had this unique audience. God's sovereignty is seen in timing and empowering. The apostles did not back down. They stood their ground.

After another jail experience, we see divine intervention (Acts 5:17) when an angel of God came at night to open the prison gates for their escape. This provision of a divine escape came with the directive for them to immediately go to the temple and continue the ministry. This was a further call to risk-taking on their part, resulting in a second arrest and appearance before a furious council intent on killing them. Gamaliel spoke logic into the situation, and tempers calmed. The apostles were then flogged and sent on their way; their lives were spared. They rejoiced in having entered into Christ's sufferings, thus well modelling their theology of suffering.

The story of Stephen (Acts 6) illustrates a powerful ministry of signs and wonders. His actions demonstrated fearlessness and risk-taking. When he was arrested, an opportunity opened up for a powerful sermon to be delivered to a select group of leaders. The leaders were enraged. His vicious stoning happened with no intervention from God, and Stephen died. One is left to wonder if Stephen's bold risk-taking, as witnessed by Saul (Acts 8:1), contributed to Saul's eventual conversion.

Paul began to preach, and he did it powerfully (Acts 9:20, 22, 27), to the point where he risked disturbing the Jews who then plotted his death. In the face of this risk, we see Paul taking a precaution to escape by night over a wall. He does not seem to be careless and wait for some special intervention by God. We assume Ananias had told Paul he had been chosen by God for a unique mandate as a messenger to the Gentiles, kings, and Israel (Acts 9:15). To step away and escape now meant saving his life in order to engage in God's special mandate. With this mandate came a promise of suffering (Acts 9:16).

The risks Paul faced were from the Church. How could they now accept a person who had gone out of his way to persecute the Church? Initially, the believers in Jerusalem mistrusted his testimony (Acts 9:26); only after the intervention of a

trusted colleague was he accepted (Acts 9:28).

The risky life of an apostle meets different ends in Acts 12. In one instance, King Herod Agrippa killed the apostle, James. There is no indication of what precipitated Herod's anger against James; this was the beginning of his persecution of believers. There is no indication of divine intervention or of opportunities to escape. Meeting with initial success as measured by the response of the Jewish leaders, Herod took steps to continue a similar fate for Peter. However, in this instance, as the Church prayed while Peter was in prison awaiting his fate, God stepped into the picture to miraculously release him.

Mission history bears out how God has chosen to do something out of the ordinary to free and release one of His servants, and yet, on the other hand, we have a list of martyrs. God does not always choose to miraculously deliver or provide a way of escape. It was also left to God to deal with Herod, which He did by cursing him with worms, causing his death (Acts 12:23).

On another occasion, Jews incited God-fearing women of high standing and leading men of the city to oppose Paul and Barnabas. They were expelled from the region, shaking the dust from their feet as they left town and moved to Iconium (Acts 13:49). Again, no particular precautions or divine intervention is evident.

They continued in Iconium with the same agenda, preaching and teaching in the synagogue, with good results. Opposition arose as they continued to speak boldly. Signs and wonders affirmed their ministry. They learned of plans to stone them, so they fled. There is no special protection from God. They land in Lystra and continue their agenda of preaching the good news.

One would almost begin to think persecution served to spread the Gospel throughout the region. Some from Iconium and Antioch caught up with Paul in Lystra and stoned him, leaving him for dead. There is no divine intervention. Paul got up, showing great boldness and with some risk to his life, went back into town. He and Barnabas went to Derbe the next day, where many people responded to their message. They were fully aware of the risk and danger, and knowing their opposition delegation was still in the area, they turned around. They headed back through the towns of Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch. You would think they were the ones most in need of member care, but their mission was to encourage the family of God. "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God," they said in Acts 14:21. Their own recent experiences stand as strong validation for their teaching (Acts 14:21-28).

Paul's second journey was again full of risk. He returned to visit the towns where he met opposition and suffered at the hands of his persecutors (Acts 15:36-41). An incident in Philippi had Paul and Silas severely flogged and imprisoned.

However, divine intervention by way of an earthquake brought about the jailer's salvation. Paul appealed to his Roman citizenship, thus gaining respect before the authorities and maybe safeguarding the Church. Paul and Silas then left town following their release and a pastoral visit to Lydia's household (Acts 16: 13-15).

The next stop was Thessalonica. Paul obeyed divine direction received during a night vision generally known as the Macedonian Call (Acts 16:9). Trouble followed Paul as he openly taught in the synagogue for three Sabbaths. He escaped at night to Berea. When trouble followed Paul, the brothers sent him to Athens for his own safety and theirs. Silas and Timothy remained in Berea (Acts 17:14). Missionary Bradley Hill observes Paul's concern for his physical safety was minimal, and not once in his recorded prayers did he pray for protection. Rather, his prayer was for an opportunity to be found for the Gospel (Hill 2000, p. 336).

In an effort to extrapolate a theology of evacuation from these passages, Hill suggests three guiding principles for when to evacuate: 1) a viable Christian community had been established; 2) the continuing presence of the missionaries, Paul, Silas, and Timothy, put the Church in danger; 3) the believers asked the missionaries to leave (Hill 2000, p. 337).

From Athens to Corinth, Paul joined up with fellow tentmakers Aquila and Priscilla and continued preaching and teaching in the synagogue. Divine intervention happened during a dream where God affirmed Paul's ministry, allayed his fears and assured protection. Paul's track record had been, preach and then face persecution, so a word from God, showing His keeper side, was probably most welcome at this juncture. Paul did an eighteen-month term in Corinth (Acts 18:9-11).

Paul next took the road to Ephesus and spent some time there. Of note is the account of a riot when the city filled the theatre and two of Paul's team were seized. Paul would have liked to defend himself and his team in front of this crowd, but his disciples stepped in, forbidding him from entering the theatre. Paul saw the wisdom of not making matters worse and perhaps further endangering the lives of the believers. He listened to his counsellors and friends and later left town. God used the city clerk to take a courageous stand and diffuse the explosive situation (Acts 19:28-31, 35).

Paul's concern for his physical safety was minimal, and not once in his recorded prayers did he pray for protection. Rather, his prayer was for an opportunity to be found for the Gospel.

We note Paul being alert and informed and, as a result making a decision to alter travel plans to evade trouble (Acts 20:3). Here, he did not choose a risky situation.

The Jerusalem trip was before him. The Holy Spirit had already informed him trouble was ahead by way of prison and hardship, but he was compelled by the Spirit to face the risk (Acts 20:22, 23). Friends pleaded with him not to go. In this case, he could not be dissuaded, and eventually, his friends said to let God's will be done (Acts 21:12-14). Upon arrival, colleagues devised a plan to do Jewish rituals to show others he respected the Law. However, in the ensuing mayhem, Paul was mobbed, beaten, and almost killed (Acts 21:27). His trial followed.

Finally, Paul sailed for Rome. In this situation, the keeper side of God was evident when panic broke out during the storm and eventual shipwreck. God had assured Paul through an angel that all would be saved. Then, while preparing a fire on the island of Malta, God protected Paul from a viper's bite as a testimony to His keeping power (Acts 28:5).

By reflecting on the lives of some of the "others" of Hebrews 11:35, then seeing how Jesus and Paul faced the risky situations of their lives, we find hope to move forward boldly and with confidence in our chaotic world. We can shape a solid biblical theology of risk to sustain us in tough times.

Summary

There is risk in daily life. For example, there are hazards when travelling, whether by air or by road, health risks, and security risks in politically and economically unstable countries. Yet, despite such risks, people carry on daily living in our global village.

There is risk in gospel ministry. In a postmodern world, we teach absolutes: a unique Scripture and a unique salvation. In societies with differing religions and valued attitudes of tolerance, we preach Christ crucified and salvation in no other name (Acts 4:12).

There is risk in missionary work. It is an ingredient of total obedience, a component of moving into Enemy territory and discipling the nations. Risk is a factor in the proclamation of a unique message and a catalyst for increased dependence on God. It can be a measuring stick showing commitment to Kingdom building.

Risk is implied in Matthew 10:16, "I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves." Jesus intentionally puts His disciples at risk in a ministry context. Mission administrators make assignment decisions that place workers at risk. Workers accept ministry

assignments placing their families at risk, knowing they may suffer or encounter harm or loss.

Jesus was well aware the mission on which He was sending His disciples was dangerous. In Matthew 10:17-21, Jesus, the leader, is very transparent about what His followers would be up against. He provides further instruction, advising them to be aware of the Enemy's tactics. They are to be alert and on guard. When brought suddenly before authorities, they are to rest assured that God's Spirit will provide the words to say. They are to expect hatred. They will be persecuted, not *if* but *when*. Yet, in the face of this reality, Jesus sought to instill courage by three times telling them not to be afraid and ascribing value to them as God's messengers (Matthew 10:24-31).

Through prayer and risk-taking, the Kingdom of God moves forward. Those who are mission team leaders and member care providers responsible for the care of Kingdom workers must have a solid understanding of biblical truth, a solid theology of risk and suffering.

Resources

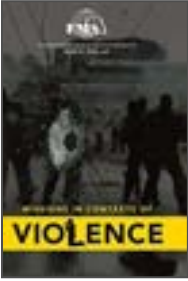
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For Further Reading



Facing Danger: A Guide to Risk by Anna Hampton

Facing Danger guides cross-cultural workers through a biblical discussion on risk, providing a spiritual and practical framework for working through cross-cultural risk assessment and management.



Missions in Contexts of Violence edited by Keith Eitel

In an age of increasing concern for this type of missions, workers will better understand martyrdom-persecution violence as it relates to telling the gospel message.

Chapter 6

Cultivating a Church/Missionary Relationship

by Suresh G.

Missions work is not just about a group of people going overseas to heal spiritual wounds and provide fresh water! It's about planting seeds of the Gospel, watering the plant, and reaping a harvest for the Kingdom of God by planting local churches across the globe. The local church is the epicentre of God's work in the world, and planting local churches is the primary vehicle by which God extends the reach of His Kingdom into the dark places of lostness.

With this in mind, missions work is no less than the global application of the command in Hebrews to meet together, "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching" (Hebrews 10:24-25). Missions strategy is devoted to considering how to stir up love and good works in the world by not neglecting to meet together.

Catching the Wind of the Missional Culture

In the consumer-centric culture, which has crept into the church, senior pastors and their staff are often under pressure to make the weekend services 'attractive' and centre all church activities around those services. In doing so, the local church's missional engagement and intercessory prayer often get reduced, at best, to one of the many ministries. Conversely, when the church's senior pastor, who is already well-rooted in Scripture and prayer, catches the wind of global missions through the Spirit of God, the church becomes an incubator for missions. Our sending church was already missional but 'caught' the global vision in a greater way

Our sending church was already missional but 'caught' the global vision in a greater way when its senior pastor became the advocate for global missions.

when its senior pastor became the advocate for global missions. He started various missions-focused activities, including concerts of prayer, monthly meetings for people interested in going or sending, and weekly missions prayer meetings, ultimately infusing global missions into the other church activities (e.g., Sunday school, small groups, etc.)

Some young adults either caught the vision or had their 'go' vision renewed. Others from the different churches heard about these missions-centred gatherings and became regular attendees. These gatherings became good networking places for those already in the field, those preparing to go, and those who were senders and supporters.

Catching the Wind of the Missional Culture - Lessons Learned

While one cannot predict when and in which direction the wind of His Spirit will blow, one can certainly raise the sails to 'catch the wind.' There are times God points His people and leads them to places where the wind is blowing. While one cannot predict such a sovereign act of God, it is critical to be 'ready' both to sense His guidance and raise the sails to catch the wind. The danger of reducing the human yearning, response, and obedience to a formula exists, but there is value in having individual and group-based spiritual rhythms help to raise the sails to catch the wind.

A large vessel has multiple sails. Our sending church was also a 'large vessel' both in terms of attendees and regarding multiple ministries. For smooth, efficient sailing, not only must all sails be raised up, but they must also be aligned in a direction to catch the wind.

In comparison to an anchored vessel, a moving vessel, even with a very slow pace, has a better chance of moving faster by catching the wind, unless it was moving in the wrong direction. So even before the senior pastor 'caught' the missions wind, the church was already 'moving' in reaching out to the people, though it was not always cross-cultural.

Pre-departure, Equipping, and Support

A common phrase in missionary circles is, "One does not become a missionary just by crossing national boundaries." Implying, the equipping, supporting, and providing opportunities for local missional engagements must begin well before one becomes an official international worker (IW) - someone who leaves their country and moves across cultures. While the entire church cannot be involved

in every step of the preparation process, both the leadership and a dedicated group(s) of people within the body need to be involved. However, tracking the key milestones along the pre-departure journey is generally the responsibility of Global Missions (GM, the “Mission Agency” of The Alliance Canada) or the parachurch mission agencies, in the case of those who are not going overseas with The Alliance Canada. Anytime more than one group of people is involved

in a process, the opportunities for support from multifaceted perspectives are abundant. However, the absence of or poorly defined roles and responsibilities of the people involved from the local church and the mission agency diminishes such pre-departure support. It can also result in the inadequate development of key areas in the missionary candidate’s critical equipping stage.

Both from the experience of ours and others alike, the consensus is local church leaders supported the pre-departure, equipping, and support processes. We were involved in the outreach and disciple-making ministries with good support from the church leadership. Both my spouse and I were part of women’s and men’s groups which helped us grow in character. Our active participation in prayer ministries supported our spiritual growth. We were also invited to join various leadership summits/conferences, which helped our pre-departure support journey.

An important aspect of support is connecting with various groups within the sending church, especially when the church is large. Through missionary candidates’ own local church ministry engagements and through intentional connections and introductions, candidates made connections with various groups such as life groups (small groups), men’s and women’s fellowship, and young adult groups. Similarly, candidates’ children connected with Sunday school and youth group attendees. The idea was that these groups would continue to provide support (prayer and practical needs, etc.) to the missionary unit once they went overseas. In turn, the ongoing connection with the missionary unit/family would help support these groups to sustain their own missional focus.

The local church’s Missions Committee, when there is one, plays a critical part in mobilizing support for the candidates. Like many others sent from our church, we had the privilege of getting to know members of this committee. They

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connected us with those small groups interested in ‘adopting’ a missionary unit. In addition, events were hosted where we, as missionary candidates, interacted with missionaries on home assignments.

When a church leadership team comprises an Outreach/Missions Pastor, who often carries the leadership responsibilities of the church’s local and global missions engagements, all of the above connections and associated support have a better chance of becoming integrated. This pastor often introduces candidates to missions-minded people and key groups in the church. They also help to clear the way when candidates hit roadblocks either in communication or in building bridges with various support groups.

Pre-departure Equipping and Support – Lessons Learned

While we are lifelong learners, particular learning and preparation journeys are far more significant and critical than others. I believe the pre-departure equipping and support journey is one of those vital instances, as it impacts the candidates’ lives and those who will be receiving them in the field. Furthermore, except under exceptional circumstances (e.g., people changing their sending agencies), this journey is seldom repeated in an IW’s life.

Like any important journey, this too calls for Scripture-based guidelines and Psalm 78:72 provides that basis, “David shepherded them with integrity of *heart*; with skillful *hands* he led them.” However, even with supervision, active engagements in relevant ministries may not meet the requirements outlined in this passage. While we have come a long way regarding holistic and contextualized missionary development, this is one area that calls for ongoing adjustments as missional engagement contexts continue to change.

The common prevailing paradigm in local churches is the local church giving and the IW receiving (or taking). Not only can this lead to the optics of unidirectional benefit, but it can also be seen as very transactional. Whereas, in the context of partnership, both the IW and the senders share the ‘five loaves and two fish’ God has given them with each other. However, the IW’s God-given ‘loaves and fish’ may look different than the ones given to each sender. Therefore, the candidates must align themselves to a partnership mindset and embrace the associated behaviours at the beginning of the pre-departure period. The local church leadership must provide guidance to adjust this mindset and behaviour so the partnership continues and even flourishes after the IW has left for the field.

A pre-departure journey with clearly identified milestones for developmental areas associated with the character (heart) and the core competencies (hands) is

as essential as a passport for the IW. For such a journey to be effective in crafting, implementation, and support, all three parties (the candidates, the local church leadership, and GM) must be actively involved. Furthermore, close involvement by the local church enables the continuance of its support to the worker on the field to be much more seamless.

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Onfield Support

While transitions for IWs have always been a challenge, intentional equipping has helped navigate these uncertain and often stressful times. Pre-departure processes and events prepare the candidates for overseas placement, but generally, not a lot has been done to equip the local church senders for the transition to supporting the IWs who are no longer physically in their midst. Churches that have done better have kept their IWs at the forefront in their regular church activities. However, sending churches' support and communication from the IWs are highly interconnected.

For most IWs, the primary mode of communication has been regular newsletters (e.g., monthly or bi-weekly), generally sent as emails. Some go the extra mile by sending video updates or making individual voice calls and group calls to their supportive small groups. The common advice from veteran workers is that we must be prepared to spend twenty percent of our time intentionally communicating and nurturing relationships with the local church senders. As discussed earlier, we are also called to have a partnership mindset versus raising various kinds of support. The following key areas where support is extended by the local church to the IW have been examined through the lens of partnership.

Prayer Partnership

Our sending church's greatest gift to us was the intercessory prayers offered on our behalf both at various regular church gatherings as well as upon urgent request. The Alliance Canada Men's prayer had a significant amount of time allocated to pray through missions prayer requests on Wednesday mornings. The monthly prayer concerts, often led by the senior pastor who had caught the wind of missions, focused even more on international ministries. The week-long annual

Solemn Assembly, held at the beginning of each year, often set the tone for prayer emphasis for the rest of the year.

While general newsletters are helpful, these prayer gatherings are better fuelled when the IWs' feed them with specific updates or even join these gatherings using remote access technologies. Paul writes, "Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality" (Romans 12:12-13). The local church meets the need by fully sending and supporting an IW in prayer. They have focused hope as well as expectant and specific patience fuelled by prayer.

Missions Event Partnership

Our sending church traditionally had an annual week-long Missions Week. Over the years, as the commitment to missions increased, the Missions Week was extended to two weeks, often multiple IWs being brought in versus one IW unit being present throughout. Later the church leadership felt adding a separate week of a relatively low-key missions focus, separated by six months from the main Missions Week, was keeping the topic and engagement before the people in a far more effective way. Although such rhythms have changed (back to standard annual Missions Week) in the recent past for several reasons, the IWs have been blessed with more significant opportunities for engagement with the congregation in multiple settings, in addition to the traditional weekend service engagements. I was personally blessed by such events. For example, during one Missions Week, God confirmed my overseas missions assignment while having a meal with the visiting missionary.

God confirmed my overseas missions assignment while having a meal with the visiting missionary.

Intentional Communication

We always looked forward to those calls when one of our supporters or a small group called or Skyped us during the pre-Zoom days. They provided us with updates on what was happening at the church, listened to what we were doing, and prayed with us. These calls became so special that our kids referred to some callers as uncles and aunts.

Financial Partnership

The sustained giving, both to the general missionary support funds and for specific missionary-led projects, are good indicators of the level of commitment

of a local church's support to its IWs. Just as those who have caught the wind of mission in their sails become either 'goers' or 'senders' of Global Missions, choosing to give also aligns one's heart to God's global cause ("For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" Matthew 6:21).

Our local church's consistent encouragement and challenge to give towards both regular missionary operating expenses and project-based Global Missions needs, along with reporting and celebrating people's responses to such appeals, and IWs reporting on how these funds were used for the furtherance of God's Kingdom, have fuelled and sustained the giving of the people. As compelling as the cause of His Kingdom is, the senders' partnership through giving is trending towards how well the sender connects with the IW—personally, purposefully, and engaging with them on the field. The level of partnership is elevated when a significant number of supporters visit the IW onsite and experience hands-on involvement while there. This can often be a mixed blessing, as some IW sites of deployment seldom provide opportunities for such engagements for a wide range of reasons outside the IW's control. However, our church has promoted and facilitated prayer walks as hands-on activities in the IW's local context.

The level of partnership is elevated when a significant number of supporters visit the IW onsite and experience hands-on involvement while there.

Onsite Visit Partnership: Sender Visiting the IW

Within a year of arrival in our adopted country, our church sent a short-term ministry team led by the missions pastor. Both our children and we as adults reconnected significantly with people from our church. Though our context prevented the group from engaging in traditional hands-on cross-cultural outreach activities, we were blessed in the way they led us in worship songs, prayer walks around our neighbourhood, and attentive listening to and prayer for our stories and struggles. The church also sent work crews to other countries where they could engage in hands-on outreach work and other work projects such as renovating a building. While such visits are a blessing to both parties (visitors and hosts), the post-visit risks must be identified and supported. Our church has been good in having debriefing and other support sessions for our short-term visitors. While their contribution, even during their short visit, was a blessing to the IWs, the greater blessing was more vigorous advocacy of missions

and missionary partnerships the returning local church members carried to the rest of the congregation.

The local church has also supported IWs by sending a group of well-equipped people to support annual events, such as children's camps, organized by IWs. Such visits call for ongoing time and other resource commitments, but they also strengthen the local church and IW partnership. Additionally, they provide the local church members with hands-on experience in running events with language and other cultural barriers; a good training ground to minister to immigrants in their own backyard.

While all visits by the local church members are important, visits to the field by the senior/lead pastor and other pastoral staff members bring greater significance due to their influence over the spiritual and missional well-being of the local body. Our church has been very generous in time and resources in sending the pastors to various field events. Such visits have been great blessings to us from the sending local church and the other workers gathered in such events. In turn, the pastors have also caught a fresh wind of the missional spirit and renewed both their personal and local church's commitment to global mission.

Onsite Visit Partnership: IW Visiting/Returning to the Local Church (Home Assignment)

The longer the IW is engaged overseas, the trip to Canada can become less of 'returning home' to strengthen their partnership and more of 'visiting the local sending church.' The turnover in pastoral staff and congregation members can further fuel this drift. This home assignment visit is another critical transition in the life of the IWs and the local church. It calls for adjustments so the partnership remains global missions centred while the IW continues to be the extended arm of the local church in fulfilling God's purpose and their calling amidst a particular unreached people group. Unlike the first field deployment, these home assignment transitions are far more gradual and subtle. Nevertheless, the failure to adjust to it by both parties can adversely affect the partnership with IWs becoming more attached to the 'facilitating agency' (e.g., GM or the parachurch agency) and the local church considering the relationship as less of a partnership and more of an obligatory funding arrangement they have with the denomination.

In our view, both the IWs and the local church leaders have taken intentional measures to remain closely connected even in the midst of leadership and congregational transitions. The church has provided visibility both to the returning IWs and their stories. The IWs, too, have done their part to re-enter the body life of the sending church by becoming worship team members, prayer partners,

small group attendees, and speakers at various gatherings, etc.

Though being invited into one's home is becoming a less common practice compared to being invited for a meal at a restaurant, we have enjoyed times of fellowship at people's homes. Regardless of the location, one cannot underestimate the power of such gatherings, whether at the coffee shop or someone's backyard. Often God used these unplanned informal times to bring mutual encouragement for a closer walk with God (deeper life) and keep the missional flame burning for the people gathered.

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The tradition of meeting the practical needs of the IWs while they are in Canada has tremendously helped keep the partnership renewed. In addition, the local church has met some fundamental requirements such as housing and usage of a vehicle, often coordinated by the Missions Committee.

Returning for Good (Back-to-Canada) Support

We have had both planned (e.g., retirement or reassignment) and unplanned (e.g., sickness or personal reasons) returns of IWs from the field. Even when a return is planned, as it was in our case, the transition is quite challenging, and the details can be daunting. For ourselves, everything from airport pick-up to the provision of somewhere to stay until we moved to our own place was a huge load off our minds.

The support for IWs during an unplanned return for good or a temporary return to deal with a crisis can be even more challenging than the planned ones. For the latter, the temptation for the local church leadership is to provide all the support the IW unit requires without proper accountability. Our local church has been quite proactive in providing the support needed for the IW to work through the crisis and related issues at hand, as well as providing accountability, ensuring the changes made are sustained and restoration to holistic health is achieved through God's grace and His people.

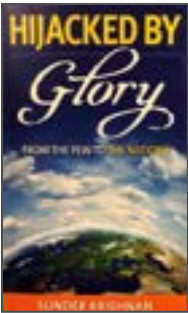
Summary

To not only survive but thrive in cross-cultural ministry, IWs need a strong support team, one providing finances, prayer, and care. To be good senders, the people of God have a critical role in this Great Commission task as missions is born out of healthy local churches. John writes, "...You will do well to send them on their journey in a manner worthy of God. For they went out for the sake of the Name ... Therefore, we ought to support such men, so that we may be fellow workers with the truth" (3 John 6-8 NASB¹). Who is he writing to? A specific audience. He is telling that audience, "Send them." The church in the abstract cannot send just anybody. Every church is meant to send missionaries.

The Apostle Paul writes to the Colossians, "We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you" (Colossians 1:3). They are on his mind because he is on their mind. They have a partnership-based relationship. In commending the Ephesian church, Paul says, "For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God's people, I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers." (Ephesians 1:15-16). He does the same with the Philippians, "God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus" (Philippians 1:8).

The sending local church's relationship with the international worker is the vital core of a healthy missions venture to fulfill the Great Commission.

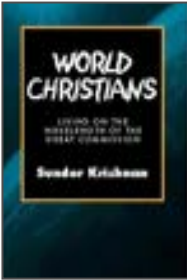
For Further Reading



Hijacked by Glory: From the Pew to the Nations by Sunder Krishnan

God's intention to bless all nations through His chosen people is the backbone of the entire biblical revelation. Yet surprisingly, it is not God's compassion for people that first drives this mandate, but rather it is God's zeal for His glory.

1. New American Standard Bible®, Copyright © 1960, 1971, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. All rights reserved.



World Christians: Living on the Wavelength of the Great Commission by Sunder Krishnan

This book offers sound theological insight and helpful suggestions for mobilizing Christians to live out the Great Commission. In addition, the author shows how to form a world mission team and increase awareness of the need for involvement in global evangelism within the local congregation.



Returning Well: Your Guide to Thriving Back "Home" After Serving Cross-Culturally by Melissa Chapman

Returning Well invites you into a guided conversation with your Creator that will reveal and apply invaluable insights as you reflect on your recent season of cross-cultural service. You will discover how this season influenced you, how to re-integrate well, and what moving forward in faith means for you.

Chapter 7

Growing Up Globally: Third Culture Kids

by Becky Matchullis

International workers’ kids live a life of diversity and adventure. Being raised in an environment different than their passport country, they are shaped through the richness of their cross-cultural experiences, lifestyles, and mobile transitions.

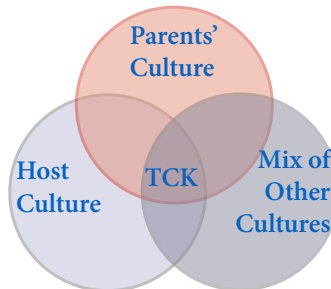
“Third Culture Kid” Defined

These missionary kids (MKs) are a subset of what’s known as *Third Culture Kids* (TCKs), a phrase coined by Dr. Ruth Hill Unseem, an American Sociologist in the 1960’s. It describes someone who has spent a good part of their developmental years outside their parents’ culture. These years are significant because their personal and cultural identity is being shaped. *Relationship* is built to all cultures, yet there’s no full ownership of any. This lack of ownership provides TCKs with a sense of belonging “everywhere and nowhere” simultaneously.

As a TCK, growing up in Malaysia, Hong Kong, and Canada, I was too Canadian to be Malaysian, yet too Chinese Malaysian to feel like I fit in Canada. Add the British influence at boarding school and my teen years in Hong Kong, and I was a mixed bag of all these cultures.

Though elements of each culture are included in a TCK’s life experience, there is a ‘neither/nor’ sense in any one of them. The place of belonging is in relationship to others who have gone through this process. Namely, other TCKs. Get a bunch of

What is the
third culture?



TCKs together, any mix of missionary kids (MKs), immigrant children, military, and diplomatic or business kids living abroad and there is a quick and deep connection!

Advantages of Growing up Globally

The TCK global life is rich and full. Three of many advantages are:

A Global Mindset

A global mindset is the awareness and understanding of the wider world and a person's place in it. It develops naturally in TCKs due to at least three influences:

1. **Cross-Cultural Enrichment** – Cultures that enrich a TCK include their countries and neighbourhoods, schools, expat communities, and international church culture. TCKs are taught different lifestyles, customs, and belief systems. This builds curiosity and sensitivity. They realize different is okay; it is to be celebrated, and there is an appreciation for other cultures and varieties of people. Tolerance to diversity, inclusion, and respect for others is developed.

“Looking back, I took so much for granted, blind to the fact that my friends had different skin colours, accents, and backgrounds. I am still very open-minded when it comes to humanity and am more empathetic and understanding when it comes to other cultures than most of my peers.”
(Teresa, 23 years, MK)

2. **Travel** – The privilege of exploring the world by visiting and learning from different landscapes, ethnic groups, cuisines, art, architecture, and more, is a large part of TCK life. It impacts learning in every way. MKs get to travel to countries most Canadians only dream about.
3. **Multilingualism** – Learning a new language comes naturally for children under six and is easier for school-age children than adults. Speaking the native tongue of their host country makes assimilation easier. Being fluent in another language is such an asset.

Our youngest, born in Indonesia, understood both Bahasa Indonesia (the common trade language) as well as Javanese, unique to the people of the island, by age three. It took us three years to speak the trade language moderately and we only learned simple greetings in Javanese.

Often, because of their global mindset, God uses adult TCKs (ATCKs) worldwide in all areas of society—family, education, media, government and politics, non-government organizations (NGOs), science and technology, business and commerce, entertainment, arts and culture, and mission organizations. With globalization, opportunities abound for TCKs because they have been intensely exposed to multiple cultures, can more easily navigate a diverse workforce, and work effectively on culturally diverse teams. I personally know MKs who are bringing God’s Kingdom into various arenas of society through their giftings. For example, I know a child/teen psychologist working in Alberta who spends 60% of his time with Indigenous families on reserves. He was an MK who, as a kid, had such compassion that he would take off his shirt and give it to a beggar child.

Some other examples include an MK, born in Russia, who is an award-winning international artist based in Ontario, and significantly influencing the art world. I also know a manager working with the federal government who endeavours to make sure all First Nations children living in Canada can access the products, services and supports as needed within her province (Jordan’s Principle). Then there is also a skilled IT working with a business in Dubai, who grew up as an MK in Nepal. Many adult MKs I know work as teachers or principals in both international schools and mission schools.

At the time of writing, in my denomination, nine percent of full-time international workers (IWs) are ATCKs; and also currently, 88 TCKs are growing up globally with their parents.

Resilience

Resilience is a common characteristic among TCKs, which develops over a lifespan. Factors lending themselves to TCK resilience include:

- 1. Adaptability** – TCKs are pushed out of their comfort zone as they face many transitions. Like chameleons, they observe their surroundings and new people, changing their “colour” of behaviour to adapt, flex, and blend in. They quickly pick up on cultural cues, body language, and attitudes. TCKs learn to be comfortable with the uncomfortable. They learn to take risks others might not.

Upon leaving Malaysia at age six, for home assignment, I dextrously handled chopsticks, greeted others by bowing slightly with palms together, NOT making eye contact with adults, and used ONLY my right hand for passing or receiving from another person. I knew more about East Indian, Chinese, and Malaysian culture than I did my Canadian culture.

- 2. Problem-Solving Skills** –A growing capacity to face the unfamiliar and deal with the unexpected is uniquely given to the TCK. They learn there is more than one way to assess and find a solution to a challenge. They think outside the box and learn resourcefulness. Problem-solving includes troubleshooting, brainstorming, and engaging others for collaboration and creative solutions.
- 3. Social and Emotional Intelligence** – TCKs can become skillful at picking up societal cues. Social and emotional intelligence is built within a network of supportive and nourishing relationships. Mission community allows MKs diverse conversations with adults. Communicating across cultures develops observational skills and teaches TCKs to flex their communication style to fit the situation. As a result, they rate higher in compassion and empathy than their mono-cultural counterparts.

“ I am fairly adept at recognising cues in other cultures as well as my own. I know that sometimes it’s not what you say but how you say it that matters. It’s a result of soaking up different cultures, people and places as a child. (Dillan, ATCK) ”

God has instilled resilience in all of us; however, it is not discovered or developed until it is revealed through great stress and challenge. MKs have ample opportunity in both!

Relationships

TCKs value relationships as they offer significance, security, and a place of belonging. These are found with:

- 1. Friends** – Home is not a place, but rather it’s people for many TCKs. Friendships are made with kids from many places.

“ I can travel to pretty much any country in the world and see old friends from my childhood. I have a wealth of memories scattered across continents and my life holds an imprint of multiple cultures. (Cici Haynes, ATCK writer) ”

TCKs are naturally drawn to finding common ground and quickly assess who is worth investing a friendship in. As a result, there is an urgency to develop and enjoy fellowship before they or the other move.

When we moved to Cambodia, our ten-year-old son was very fearful. It didn't help that UN troops were there to keep peace. Ryan developed a friendship with Tim, who had been there four years. He was a 'cultural broker,' showing Ryan how to be comfortable in the space of 'foreign.' Ryan's panic attacks disappeared. A year later, Ryan accompanied Tim's family to Australia for three weeks. When we repatriated to Canada, Tim came to stay with us for a summer. What kid, growing up in Canada, gets that opportunity?

Others in the mission community become adopted extended families. MKs play well with all, no matter the age difference. Often older MKs mentor younger ones naturally.

My most significant friendship as an MK was with a guy three years older than I. We became close friends, even though he had a girlfriend. He encouraged and championed me. His voice and influence significantly impacted those awkward teen years.

Local neighbours are curious about the new foreign family. Countless friendships can be developed with neighbours as missionary families play in the local park, join in sports games, or walk in the neighbourhood. TCKs are natural 'bridge builders.'

- 2. Family** – The one constant within an IW family is their own family unit. Moving into unfamiliar situations in a new country can cause significant strain. With the broader network of support systems (friends and extended family in Canada) distant and in a different time zone, the family is forced to help each other adapt. As a result, they spend significantly more time together, connecting and developing memories through shared experiences. Investing in effective communication, conflict resolution skills, and teaching children to live well cross-culturally will enhance family strength and bonding.

“We're more friends than anything in my family. Our shared experience of moving drew us closer together because you don't have that wider network around you. You draw in and share in a non-hierarchical way that's probably outside the norm. We have so many amazing, shared experiences no other family has. (Alex, TCK from Indonesia)”

- 3. Faith in God** – TCKs have a front-row seat when it comes to seeing God work in miraculous ways through healing, providing for the poor, and transforming lives. As they observe the unique personality of the Body of Christ in their host culture, they open to different expressions of faith.

“We encouraged our kids to be a part of our ministry where they felt comfortable. This taught them service and value in Christ at a young age. Our ministry was enriched because we served as a family and their faith was made tangible.”
(Kim, IW Mom)

Questions such as “Why are they poor and we aren’t?” and “why do bad things happen to innocent people?” are often wrestled with earlier in the life of an MK. Seeing adults in the mission community living in dependence on God also impacts the MK. Though each faith journey is different, God is grace and wastes no experience, painful or good, to express His faithfulness, love, and pursue a relationship with us.

A powerful source of influence in the life of MKs is relationships. They enrich, teach, and inspire while each brings rich and rewarding lives.

Challenges of Growing up outside One’s Passport Country

Reading the advantages above, parents may exclaim, “Sign us up!” There are, however, challenges any parent would be wise to ponder and learn how best to [help their TCKs navigate](#).

Education is frequently a fear factor for parents contemplating pursuing missions. According to International Christian Schools’ (ICS) research, international schools provide education to more than 3.8 million children worldwide. TCKs have wide and varied options, including international, mission, boarding or national schools, distance and online learning, or homeschooling. Research reveals TCKs are, for the most part, well above average academically upon returning to their passport countries. Children with special needs deserve further investigation as to the best schooling and support in the host culture.

Two challenges impacting TCKs are:

- 1. Frequent Change and Transition** – IW families navigate three influential transitions: relocation, re-entry for home assignment, and repatriation. Multiple stressors arise, including:

- The stripping of support systems, safety around the familiar, and a sense of significance from being known by those they are leaving.
- Changes in routines, roles, relationships, and cultural rules.
- Returning to their passport country for home leave/assignment is temporary - two months to a year. It's exciting during the honeymoon stage; however, "home" has changed, and so has the TCK.

Suniya Luthar, in her writing on *Resilience & Vulnerability in Childhood Adversities*, states, "The major risk factors for children tend to lie within chronic and transitional events rather than acute risks."

Because of frequent relocations, the word "home" can be a difficult concept. Here is how a seven-year-old MK put in when introducing himself at The Alliance Canada's Re-Entry Camp I directed during a Home Ministries Seminar, "My name is Peter*¹. Hi and bye."

Peter was so used to having people come and go that he added "bye" because he knew this person would also eventually be gone. Everything can change in a plane ride for the TCK.

“At seven, I moved to Kenya with my family. Looking back, this move and the many moves that followed had a huge impact on me as a person. I was uprooted and had to leave everything behind. On Friday I was in Canada; on Tuesday I was at school in Kenya. (Charles, age 26)”

With every move comes culture shock and stress. Most children are more able to cope with change than adults, yet this stress can leave a child disorientated because of the unfamiliar and loss of control. Change of surroundings, from climate extremes to a new living space, an unknown language, foreign foods, smells, sounds, and strange creatures bombard a child's senses. The more prepared a child is, the better they will adapt, yet it takes time, patience, understanding, and love as you go through change together as a family.

Some transitions are like having the TCKs security blanket ripped to shreds before their eyes. Others are easier, neater, and shorter. The best outcome through transition is adding colour and vibrancy to their lives, developing resilience and working through the pain it brings at their current developmental stage of life.

- 2. *Paradoxical Living*** – TCKs are partially the result of a paradox of enriching and complicated experiences. This includes adapting to a life lived in

1. Name changed for privacy

different cultures, even before their own identity is developed. Paradoxical living is experienced in:

- *Relationships* – On one hand, TCKs have friends from around the world. On the other, they can lack close relationships. They may not be the ones moving, but many of their friends are mobile, so maintaining relationships can be challenging.

The same is true with extended family. Connection needs intentionality. Celebrating seasonal holidays, birthdays, and achievements will be done through technology. The younger the child, the more present to place they are. The older the child, the more they desire connection to peers. Contact with grandparents, aunts, and uncles are missed, yet ‘replaced’ with local “mission family,” as already mentioned.

Our children called adults in our mission ‘uncles and aunts’ and they had a ‘grandma’ in Cambodia. It was mutual because her grandchildren, in Canada, were our children’s age. It filled a vacant spot in all their lives.

- *Places and Experiences* – TCKs experience familiarity with the customs of their host country yet may feel out of place in their passport country. Church life is very different in passport and host countries. Cultural rules MKs learn in their host country can be dissimilar in their passport country, for example:
 - Some have an intuitive understanding of world geography, yet the provinces of Canada are not known.
 - Some may forget Canadians go into a bathroom rather than find a bush.
 - They may wear flip-flops year-round in Canada because socks and shoes are foreign to them.
 - Laws are merely a suggestion in some countries, and police cannot be trusted.
 - Some can easily navigate complex transport systems but not learn to drive until they are in their late teens.

TCKs are citizens of everywhere and nowhere. Home is nowhere and everywhere. Airports are a place of transit, yet many TCKs identify with Olaf:

“Airports are a place in my heart. I saw a banner once asking: ‘where do you go when you say you are going home,’ and my immediate thought was the airport. (Olaf, TCK from Norway)”

- *Feelings* – Any child or teen experiences a paradox of feelings; however, for the TCK, it tends to be more extreme and frequent. Here are some quotes from MKs I have debriefed over the years:
 - I love the extreme adventure and hate the huge boredom in moves.
 - I feel crappy and happy – 10/10 for both.
 - I can feel very safe and very vulnerable.
 - I adapt easily but I don’t connect deeply.
 - Sometimes the pain is so great and other times the excitement is euphoric.
 - I have complete confidence one hour, and the next, I am afraid and want to hide.
 - I fit everywhere, yet don’t really fit anywhere and I can feel very alone in a group.
 - I care deeply about what others think and at other times I don’t give a _ _ _ _!

As they work through the complexities of their growing up years, they can “harness the advantages and disarm the hazards” (Michele Pheonix²), bringing valuable assets that this paradoxical life offers into their adult years. They require help and guidance in this process.

Issues Adult TCKs Face

The two most impactful issues ATCKs face are identity challenges and unresolved grief.

1. **Identity Challenges** - *Where is home? Where do I belong? Who am I?*

The hardest question for a TCK to answer is, “Where are you from?” This causes a scurry of panicked brain activity, “*What do they mean? Where was I*

2. Michèle is a mentor, writer and speaker with a heart for MKs. She taught for 20 years at Black Forest Academy (Germany) before launching her own ministry advocating for Third Culture Kids.

Compilation of Advantages and Challenges of the TCK Life

ADVANTAGES

Global mindset/large world view
 Resilience
 Cross-cultural enrichment
 Adaptability
 Bi(multi)lingualism
 Travel
 Empathy
 Many friends
 Social and emotional savvy
 Independent/confident
 Ability to blend in (cultural chameleon)
 Observational skills
 Ability to deal with crises/challenges
 Creative problem solvers
 Cultural bridges

CHALLENGES

Rootlessness and restlessness
 Confused identity
 Ignorance of home culture
 Lack of full ownership of any culture
 Lack of cultural balance
 Feeling lack of choice/control
 Difficulties with sense of belonging
 Many relationship losses
 Emotional withdrawal
 Fear of attachment
 Feeling different
 Unresolved grief

born, or where am I living now?" When TCKs return to their passport country to repatriate for college, they look like Canadians and are presumed by Canadians to automatically know cultural rules. Except they don't. They look, dress, and talk like Canadians; however, they identify with other places internally. This can lead to a sense of insecurity and even identity crisis. They are not trying to be different; they are simply being another culture's (or mix of cultures) definition of 'normal.'

“ In Africa I knew I wasn't African and I thought it was because I was American. Now, I'm in America and I found out I'm not really like the Americans either. Who am I? I wonder. (Ruth Van Reken, co-author of "Growing Up Among World's") ”

When TCKs do not have support in re-entering their home culture or understanding the dynamics of their lifestyle, they may conclude something is ‘wrong’ with them because they do not fit in. Sometimes they take on a permanent identity of ‘being different,’ which can have them feeling alone and isolated. It takes time and resources for ATCKs to come to grips with the true core of who they are, created in the image of God.

Home for the TCK lies in people and experiences. It is the sounds, sights, smells, savours, and the feel of textures in all the places and people they have loved and lived. It is the agony of goodbyes and the adventure of travel. It is the many forced transitions. Home for the MK is, as Michele Pheonix so beautifully wrote, “mixed and muddled and meaningful in its indescribable life-defining homeness.”

Growing up with multiple cultural cues influencing their self-concept and identity, ATCKs often report feeling rootless and restless. This can play out in their choices as adults with work and relationships. In addition, there can be an ache for home.

“When I fly to Asia, I am so excited... I am going ‘home.’ However, when I get there, it doesn’t feel quite like home. Then, I look forward to returning to Canada, where my homebase has been for decades, only to find myself feeling a little out of sorts. It’s not quite like home either. (B., an ATCK)”

2. **Unresolved Grief - The Pain of Continual Losses**

By the age of eighteen, most MKs will have experienced at least eight major moves (Interaction International). Add to this living in a transient and multicultural community, which results in a significant loss. According to Ruth Van Reken, a TCK researcher, author, speaker, and expert, “unresolved grief is the most urgent mental health issue facing TCKs—both as children and as the adults they will become.”³

The challenge with TCK loss is that it is ambiguous, intangible, and occurs without closure or clear understanding. This kind of loss leaves one searching for answers; it complicates and delays the grieving process. So what does this look like for the MK? A loss of

- familiar physical surroundings;

3. Taken from an article and talk that Ruth Van Reken gave for <https://www.crossculturalkid.org/who-are-cross-cultural-kids/> called. *Third Culture Kids: Prototypes for Understanding Other Cross-Cultural Kids*

- security in knowing how things work in a culture and what to expect;
- lifestyle – passport country being very different than host culture;
- significance in roles and status – being known, understood, and celebrated;
- identity – (Who am I? Where do I belong? What are my true colours?);
- social networks – sports teams, youth groups, classmates, neighbourhood kids;
- dreams dashed and what could have been if they had stayed— playing in the band, developing soccer skills, been picked for the year-end drama performance...;
- a predictable world, comfort, and stability.

To grieve loss is to feel the pain of what was taken because it was rich, full, and beautiful. For the MK, questions around loss are often directly tied to God and their faith because He called their parents to be international workers and have them live this life.

An MK, who was part of ReBoot (<https://more.outreach.ca/What-We-Do/Retreats/ReBoot>) as a nineteen-year-old returning for university, expressed his grief this way, “I’ve lost my home, my security, my church, my friends, my job, my relationships....It continues to haunt me that I will never see the places that I roamed in the same light again, nor will I breathe the air as someone who is planted there. I lost myself in the convoluted mission of leaving (my host country). There is no way to express how lost I feel, and I don’t think anything can change that. No amount of crying or talking will heal my soul.”

This is raw, profound grief, two months after returning to Canada, alone after leaving all he knew back in his host country of Brazil. He has since graduated from university, married, and has found his place in Canada through relationships, work, and volunteering with refugees from South America.

Loss after loss experienced while growing up can bring the normal human defence mechanisms of denial and detachment to the pain experienced, especially when children and teens are not given the opportunity, or know-how, to express it. This often shows up in minimizing, rationalizing, and avoiding their feelings. The challenge is that it will come out sometime and keep showing up until it is processed! Thus, the issues of unrecognized and unresolved grief play a significant role in the life of the ATCK.

“

When we (MKs) understand our losses and their impact on our lives—through the process of discerning what they are, how they shape our view of God and self, and how they can lead us both to greater strength and dependence— only then can something beneficial and beautiful come from the bitter pill of the goodbyes inherent to the life of an MK. (Michele Pheonix)

”

Conclusion

As someone who has raised TCKs and had the honour of working with hundreds of IW families, it is evident each TCK is unique. Their experiences are perceived differently, even when going through the same circumstances as a family. However, by far, most TCKs turn out as capable, responsible, confident, and contributing members of this globe. Their lives are richer because they have experienced the world. It is worth it.

Writing as someone who has lived this TCK/ATCK life, I would not trade it for anything! I have lived an adventure like no other and am privileged. It's impossible to make sense of all I have experienced, challenging and complicated, abundant and joyful. I look back, grateful for all the gifts of growing up as an MK; what I have lived, learned, who I have become, and what I have been able to give back to this globe. The years of processing unresolved grief were at times excruciating. Yet, with God's illumination and grace, the scattered and painful pieces of me were brought together into a beautiful picture of who I am as an image-bearer of Christ.

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- Suniya Luthar (editor). 2003. *Resilience & Vulnerability: Adaptation in the Context of Childhood Adversities*. Cambridge University Press
- Van Reken, Ruth, David Pollock, Michael Pollock. 2017. *Third Culture Kids: The Experience of Growing Up Among Worlds*. Quercus.

For Further Reading



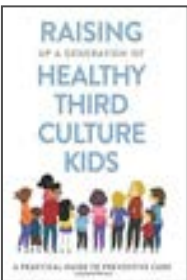
Third Culture Kids: Growing Up Among Worlds, 3rd Edition by Ruth Van Reken, David Pollock, and Michael Pollock

Emphasis is on the modern TCK and addressing the impact of technology, cultural complexity, diversity and inclusion and transitions. Includes new advice for parents and others for how to support TCKs as they navigate work, relationships, social settings and their own personal development.



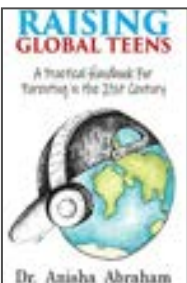
Misunderstood: The Impact of Growing Up Overseas in the 21st Century by Tanya Crossman

Over 200 million people currently live abroad; more than 50 million are temporary residents, intending to return to their country of origin. *Misunderstood* explores the impact international life can have on the children of such families - while they live overseas, when they return, and as they mature into adults.



Raising up a Generation of Healthy Third Culture Kids: A Practical Guide to Preventative Care by Lauren Wells

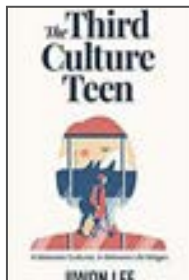
Lauren Wells has gifted us with a gentle guide and a preventive health primer, unique in the field of third culture kid literature. This book is a goldmine of wisdom, organized in a practical and readable format.



Raising Global Teens: A Practical Handbook for Parenting in the 21st Century by Anisha Abraham

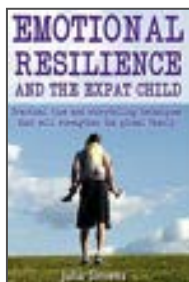
How can we help third culture teens be happy, healthy, and resilient? *Raising Global Teens* explores the hot topics adolescents experience today: identity, social media, body image, traumatic events, puberty, drugs and stress all in the context of our modern, mobile world. In this easy-to-read handbook, Dr. Anisha combines real-world examples with practical solutions, drawing on the latest research, her own

experience and that of the many cross-cultural teens she has worked with over the last 25 years.



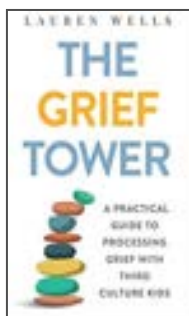
***The Third Culture Teen: In Between Cultures, In Between Life Stages* by Jiwon Lee**

This book denotes how being an expat means a life of journeying — not only a physical journey around the world but a psychological one within yourself. The author shares her struggles with identity, lacking the confidence to call herself a true Korean. She describes how she has felt like a mish-mash of all the cultures within her, which enhanced her insecurities about her “unfinished,” “incomplete” self. In this book are fascinating stories of third culture teens who have overcome their difficulties and used them to their advantage.



***Emotional Resilience and the Expat Child: Practical Storytelling Techniques That Will Strengthen the Global Family* by Julia Simens**

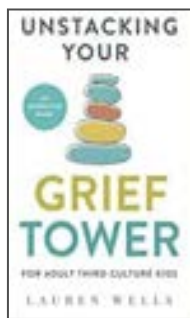
The author provides a step-by-step guide that is designed to increase a child’s emotional vocabulary and emotional intelligence. Doing this will enable your child to achieve his or her fullest potential. The bond between an adult and child is key to the psychological health of the child. For the expatriate child, this bond is more vital than ever. This workbook has been created for you to use together and will provide the perfect place to connect for you and your family. With easily understood and practical steps any parent can apply, you can start to create and enjoy your family’s ‘emotion stories’. This book will help you to develop the mutually respectful and loving relationships with your kids that you’ve always wanted.



***The Grief Tower: A Practical Guide to Processing Grief with Third Culture Kids* by Lauren Wells**

Children who grow up outside of their parent’s passport country, Third Culture Kids (TCKs), experience a significant number of losses, grief-inducing experiences, and traumas during their developmental years. These events stack up like blocks on a tower throughout the life of the TCK, creating what Lauren Wells has coined the Grief Tower. If it continues to stack without these experiences being processed, a TCK’s Grief Tower is likely to crash in their early adulthood. But is this avoidable? Can parents and caregivers provide care that prevents the tower from stacking

too high in the first place? The answer is yes, and this practical resource is full of tools for helping the TCKs we love to process their grief.



Unstacking Your Grief Tower: A Guide to Processing Grief as an Adult Third Culture Kid by Lauren Wells

When we tell people that we lived abroad during our developmental years, we're often met with awe and envy. What they don't see are the number of losses we experienced with each move, the amount of "goodbyes" we said, or the hardships that we endured. Each of these stack up like blocks on a tower, each block influencing how we deal with the next hardship we face. This hope-filled book offers you the invitation to uncover and process the blocks on your Grief Tower. Through her own experience, Lauren Wells walks you compassionately and practically through unstacking your Grief Tower in light of your Third Culture Kid experiences.

Books for TCKs

B at Home: Emma Moves Again by Valerie Besanceney.

A delightful children's book about a 10-year-old girl who is moving. "Emma is only ten years old but has already moved twice. Now, her parents are telling her the family is moving again. She's furious, sad, nervous, and a little excited, all at the same time. Unsure of how to tackle these conflicting emotions, she turns to B, her faithful teddy bear. While trying to come to terms with the challenges of another move, what Emma really wants is just to 'be at home.'"

The Feelings Series by Trace Moroney

Picture books that explain emotions, teach emotional vocabulary, and model emotional expression to young children. Not TCK specific, but extremely beneficial (comes child psychologist recommended).

Swirly by Sara Saunders

Lila is born in the Blue Country but moves with her parents to the Yellow Country when she is a little girl. As she gets older, she discovers that she isn't all blue—she has swirls of yellow from growing up in the Yellow Country! Lila isn't just like her yellow friends or her blue cousins, so she feels as though she doesn't fit in anywhere. But when she meets another swirly kid and his swirly mom, she finds out that she does belong somewhere . . . with a very special swirly Someone.

Zara’s Big Messy Goodbye by Rebekah Borucki

A book that teaches elementary students about different grief styles. Character is a seven-year-old girl who experiences a death in her family. Together with her mother, she learns about grief and how to give and receive comfort. The content is applicable to other grief experiences, such as that of global transition. Includes a guide for parents, educators, and other caregivers written by grief and trauma therapist Gina Moffa with exercises to work through.

Slurping Soup and Other Confusions – by Tonges et al.

This book is a collection of 23 real-life stories from TCKs followed by activities to go along with the stories. An excellent resource for parents and kids in transition.

See Ya Later by Allie Rader Emily Steele Jackson

Fiction for middle school students about the experiences of adjusting after a first move abroad. Character is a seventh-grade girl from the U.S. who moves to Thailand with her family.

The Global Nomad’s Guide to University Transition by Tina L. Quick

A treasure for university students and their parents. This resource is “a guide book to help these students understand what takes place in re-entry and/or transition and gives them the tools and strategies they need to not only survive but to thrive in the adjustment. This is the first book written to and for students who have been living outside their “passport” countries but are either returning “home” or transitioning on to another host country for college/university.”

Websites

The MORE Network Resource Library: <https://mnrl.outreach.ca/> Hundreds of articles and helpful resources for IW families, including parenting TCKs, which are specifically here: <https://mnrl.outreach.ca/Resources/Browse/cid/240/MKs-TCKs>

Michele Pheonix’s articles, blogs and videos on MK’s: <https://michelephoenix.com/top-reads/>

Interaction International: <https://interactionintl.org/> Excellent programs and support for TCKs/MKs and caregivers.

Part B

MAINTAINING HEALTHY WORKERS

Chapter 8

Caring for International Workers

by Judith Milne Wiebe

This chapter was first published in *Making God Known*.¹ Used with permission.

The late 1990s and early 2000s were exciting times to be part of the new Global Ministries Leadership Team. I consider myself blessed to have been in the right place at the right time. My ministry career with the C&MA began in 1983 when I was hired to provide administrative support to Arnold Cook, the newly appointed vice president for Personnel and Missions. By the early 1990s, I was serving as director of Missionary Services.

Others have written in detail about the circumstances surrounding the launch of Global Ministries (GM) and the challenges of stepping into responsibilities previously overseen by the Division of Overseas Ministries in the United States. In 2000, as part of forming the new GM leadership team, I was given the opportunity to design a member care plan, and I was appointed as the first director of Member Care in 2001.

At that time, very few missions had a member care department, so it was an exciting time to network with others and dream about what this could look like for the Global Ministries Leadership Team. There were a number of factors that helped to shape member care for GM:

1. **A new and rapidly growing interest in member care.** In 1980, there was an informal meeting of mental health professionals who gathered in Angola, Indiana, to discuss ways to come alongside international workers (IWs) and provide care and support. This gathering grew to become the Mental Health and Missions Conference (MH&M), which continues to meet annually. These member care pioneers “created a vision, a rationale and a vocabulary for missionary care, convening church and mission leaders with mental health professionals...The movement rapidly embraced wholistic care, extending

1. Brown, Ronald and Charles Cook (editors). 2020. *Making God Known: To Least-Reached People in Extraordinary Ways*. The Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada.

into pastoral, medical, relational, life stage, and systems issues.”²

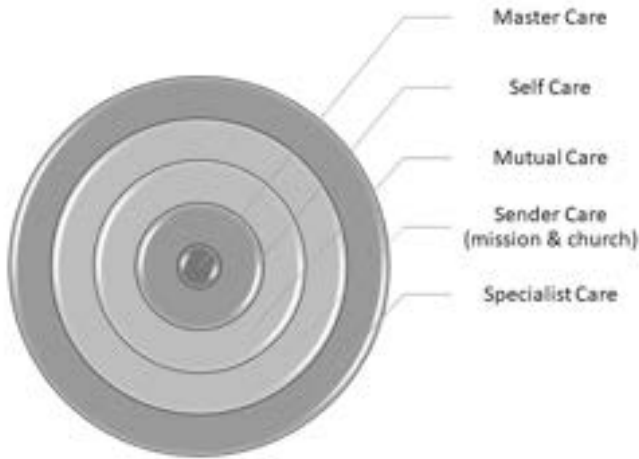
My yearly attendance at MH&M, beginning in 1994, certainly fueled my desire to improve the level of care provided to our Canadian workers and helped me to identify people, networks, and resources that could help toward that end.

2. **Dr. Joan Carter**, professor of counselling at Canadian Theological Seminary, had a keen interest in missions and a deep love for Alliance personnel working in overseas ministries. During numerous trips to Latin America, Africa, Asia, and Eastern Europe she provided individual counselling and group workshops on topics such as interpersonal relationships, stress management, and self-care. She also did research on the unique stressors faced by IWs and provided input to GM leaders on ways to better support our workers. Her research contributed valuable data and observations for the larger mission community. Joan became not only a dear friend to me but also a highly valued mentor in my own development as a member care provider.
3. **International Health Management (IHM)**. Our partnership with IHM was and continues to be a critical part of GM’s member care plan. In the mid-1980s, Dr. Ken Gamble began providing medical reports and clearance for all GM candidates and IWs. One of the things I most valued about Dr. Gamble is that he did not use the screening process to *eliminate* personnel from serving, but rather to determine the ideal context where individuals could thrive in the overseas setting. In 2001, GM began using the services of the new clinical psychologist at IHM, Dr. Duncan Westwood, to provide screening for candidates as well as debriefings for IWs and counselling as needed. Together, Dr. Gamble, Dr. Westwood, and the team at IHM continue to provide invaluable advice and support to the GM team.

The movement rapidly embraced wholistic care, extending into pastoral, medical, relational, life stage, and systems issues.

The first official Global Ministries member care plan was developed in 2001 and was heavily informed by the writings of Kelly O’Donnell³:

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- 2 Dodds, L. (n.d.). *Missionary Member Care Movement*. Retrieved from https://www.thearda.com/timeline/movements/movement_25.asp
 - 3 O’Donnell, K. (2002). *Doing Member Care Well: Perspectives and Practices From Around the World*. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library.



- **Master Care** – We recognize that God is at work in the life of each member, using the cross-cultural journey to refine and shape them to the image of Christ. Their renewing and intimate relationship with God, and their identity as the beloved child of God, are central to the health and well-being of each person. The primary and most powerful source of care is God Himself.
- **Self Care** – We believe it is the responsibility of each member to wisely provide for their own well-being and that of their family. Given the challenges of cross-cultural living, each member is encouraged to explore and embrace a biblical theology of risk, suffering, and forgiveness.
- **Mutual Care** – We are compelled to support, encourage, correct, and be accountable to one another, as modeled and commanded by Christ. This includes both fellow IWs and nationals and should encompass the “one another” verses of Scripture.
- **Sender Care** – We believe that the sending mission and sending church(es) must partner to provide ongoing care and support for the workers and their families throughout the mission life cycle (i.e. recruitment through to retirement).
- **Specialist Care** – We recognize the importance of specialists (i.e. medical, psychological, financial, crisis response, Third Culture Kid [TCK] education, pastoral care, etc.) to supplement the level of care provided by GM.

Over time, we were able to develop a flow of care for all stages of international service. This included:

- Recruitment and Screening

- Appointment and Pre-Departure Orientation
- Arrival on Field/Language Study/First Year
- Ministry/Field Life
- Home Assignment
- Stage of Life Transitions (e.g. TCKs graduation, preparing for retirement, etc.)

As others have written elsewhere in this book, Global Ministries was intentional in focusing on least-reached people groups. The nature of this kind of ministry often means investing years in learning the culture and language with very little tangible fruit, which can become discouraging (especially when filling in those dreaded year-end reports!). GM leadership wanted to balance two important goals—church planting and healthy workers.

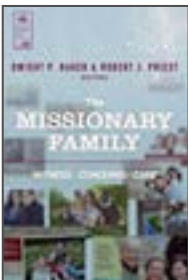
In our desire to “elevate” the nurturing of the IW’s relationship with God, we introduced a concept that we called the [Wellness Plan](#) in 2008 using a template based on The Greatest Commandment:

“...’Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these” (Mark 12:29-31).

The Wellness Plan provides a format for goal-setting in the areas of heart, soul, mind, strength, and relationships. Every international worker with Global Ministries is required to complete their personal Wellness Plan at least once a year and to share it with at least one other person for accountability.

Doing member care well is a critical component in fulfilling the Great Commission. We share Christ not only with our words, but also by how well we model loving God with all our heart, soul, mind, strength, and others as ourselves.

For Further Reading



The Missionary Family: Witness, Concerns, Cares by Priest Baker

What special concerns does sending missionary families raise for the conduct of mission? What means are available for extending care and support to missionary families? These issues are the focus of the chapters in part 1 of this book. Part 2 serves the mission community by scrutinizing such matters as sexual abuse, offering legal, historical, and psychological perspectives on the topic. This forum is presented with the prayer that it will serve

as an opening to and basis for ongoing missiological conversation about an urgent and timely topic.



Encountering Missionary Life and Work: Preparing for Intercultural Ministry by Tom Steffan and Lois Mckinney Douglas

This book provides practical guidance regarding getting ready for the mission field and the realities of life on the field. The authors begin by examining the contemporary context for missions, including the recognition that the world's mission fields are in constant and often rapid change. They then discuss aspects of preparing oneself for the mission field, beginning with home front preparations and moving to on the field preparations. The final section deals with practical issues and challenges of missionary life.



Healthy, Resilient and Effective: In Cross-Cultural Ministry by Laura Mae Gardner

This book has been designed to help leaders of sending agencies and churches in creating a comprehensive care plan for their members in mission. The first nine chapters give a comprehensive overview about the why and how-to of setting up a member care plan for cross-cultural workers. The following chapters discuss in depth the challenges cross-cultural workers are dealing with and what member carers (church, friends, agency) can do to assist them and even more importantly how to avoid unnecessary crises and suffering on the part of these choice people of God.



Resilience and Vulnerability: Adaptation in the Context of Childhood Adversities edited by Suniya S. Luthar

Integrated in this book are contributions from leading scientists who have studied children's adjustment across risks common in contemporary society. Chapters in the first half of the book focus on risks emanating from the family, and in the second half, on risks stemming from the wider community. The concluding chapter integrates the evidence presented to determine considerations for future research, and directions for interventions and social policies.

Chapter 9

Philosophy and Structure of Care for Cross-Cultural Workers

by Beth Cook

One of our daughters returned from a full day of grade 7 studies at our local public school; having walked home with her brother, she flopped onto the couch and, as per usual, began to unpack her day with John and me. The day's drama included who had made the cuts for the girls' volleyball team. The story unfolded, revealing two of her friends, twins, got some challenging news. One twin made the team, and the other did not. I commented, "That must have been tough for all the girls. How did you handle it?" She sincerely but rather casually said, "Oh Mom, I just member cared her."

This story still makes us chuckle as we recall the early days of trying to explain to our three kids (and our supporters!) what our new role entailed. Explaining is incredibly challenging given the confidential nature of much of our work. Simplifying it down to its most basic level, I explained to our kids our job was to listen well to international workers (IWs), listen to the Holy Spirit, and respond accordingly. Our twelve-year-old took this at face value and transferred it to her own context. In sharing her story, she reminded me we all live in a web of care and respond to the needs and responsibilities involved in our caring community. We all are called to listen and love well and respond as the Spirit invites us.

Structure of Care

Judy Wiebe has outlined well for us how The Alliance Canada first developed its Member Care structure and how it was expanded and strengthened over the next few years. Much of those structural pieces continue to inform how we "do" Member Care today. In the book *Doing Member Care Well: Perspectives and Practices from Around the World*, author Kelly O'Donnell outlines five types of care needed for the overseas worker. I love the visual this author uses, the image of a bullseye. At the centre of the bullseye, we have Master Care. This speaks to the foundational and formational aspect of identity in Christ and receiving God's love as the core of our identity and care. From there, it flows outward, moving from

Self Care to Mutual Care to Sender Care, and finally to Specialist Care. I will give a synopsis of what each of these types of care looks like within our organization.

Master Care

It cannot be emphasized enough how the core of all we do begins with and flows from our identity in, and relationship with, the Triune God. Our Competencies Rubric, explained in chapter four by Harvey Matchullis, captures well the concept of our value of Presence and what that looks like when lived out. The more invested we are in our relationship with God, the natural outcome is increased responsiveness to the lead of His Spirit in our ministry, but equally in our personal lives. God cares deeply about the well-being of His children and longs to guide them into wholeness in every aspect of their day-to-day lives. While Master Care seems to be the centre of the bullseye, so to speak, it actually encompasses all of our care structure as we depend entirely on Him to lead and guide an individual's or family's care through health and also a crisis.

Self-Care

Ownership of one's care is a vital ingredient to a strong web of care. A central part of good self-care is self-awareness. Through the Grip-Birkman assessment tool, we seek to help individual IWs know who they are, how they are wired and gifted, and what they need to thrive in daily life while also weathering a crisis resiliently. Some IWs choose to use additional tools like the Myers-Briggs or the Enneagram to help them explore who God has made them to be. I love this passage, Galatians 6:4-5 (MSG¹) "Make a careful exploration of who you are and the work you have been given, and then sink yourself into that. Don't be impressed with yourself. Don't compare yourself with others. Each of you must take responsibility for doing the creative best you can with your own life."

Once individuals know who they are in Christ and begin unpacking who they are, considering how He has created them to uniquely reflect Him, they are better equipped to engage in self-care. For our workers, this involves developing a [Wellness Plan](#)² to both acknowledge how they are receiving God's love and how they will then love God with their heart (emotional health), soul (spiritual health), mind (intellectual health), and strength (physical and financial health). In turn, they love their neighbours as themselves. The Wellness Plan is to be updated at least once a year and shared with a trusted mentor or accountability partner. IWs may also choose to share with their direct report during their Yearly Review Evaluation.

1. *The Message* (MSG). Copyright © 1993, 2002, 2018 by Eugene H. Peterson

2. Outlined by Judy Wiebe in [Chapter 8](#)

Mutual Care

This involves body life. Mutual caregivers would include teammates, peers (other cross-cultural workers, local co-workers, and friends), accountability partners (a requirement for each Alliance global ministries worker), mentors, and family members.

Building on the love of God and then an awareness of who we are in Him,

we are well-equipped to receive both the love, care, and growth-related input, of those in community with us. Some examples of mutual care would include being housed by another family when arriving on the field, celebrating holidays and birthdays with “field family,” regular accountability connects with a trusted friend who speaks truth into one’s life, and engagement in a faith community. When these various relationships are invested in and nurtured, the IW will have a web of support when facing a crisis or struggle. Examples of this would be caring for the kids of a pregnant mom now on bedrest, paying attention to the verbal *breadcrumbs* of a single co-worker who is struggling with loneliness and finding tangible ways to listen well first and then come alongside to connect them into community in meaningful ways, or simply being honest and vulnerable about one’s own struggles to make it easier for others to share and seek help. The core of mutual care is not one person who has it all together taking care of someone in a season of struggle. It is about responding to the Spirit’s invitation and bringing Him glory, not ourselves. Being vulnerable and honest in our struggles and in the Spirit-won victories in our lives are great community builders and make even more space for God to be glorified in our mutual care.

Mutual caregivers would include teammates, peers...accountability partners...mentors, and family members.

Sender Care

I am often asked how our organization oversees so many workers with only two Member Care Developers. The answer is simple, really. While John and I serve as point people and resource people for Member Care, as a global team, we have a common philosophy—member care is everyone’s responsibility. This is especially true for those in shepherding leadership roles within our organization; team leaders, team developers, and regional developers all have much more interaction in the day-to-day operations of our work. They are likely the first to notice a struggle or recognize something is not as it should be for those who are single, married, or within their families. These leaders understand the unique stressors

associated with specific geographic locations and know intricate team dynamics. All are expected to continue to hone their reflective listening and question-asking skills. Without their vital, figurative fingers on the pulse of our global team, my role as Member Care Developer would be incredibly more complicated and capacity-depleting. It was never meant to be a one- or two-person job. Additionally, the role of our overseeing leadership like the vice president of Global Ministries (Venture) and the president of The Alliance Canada are vital advocates for care. Because Member Care is championed at every level and not just an afterthought, it continues to be an integral part of our operational standard.

A second vital aspect of sender care is our sending churches. Each IW has a sending church and sometimes a network of intentional churches that provide care and encouragement. The Global Ministries' (GM) role in an IW's life is organizational and is limited to some extent by the span of their employment with us. However, the sending church's relationship is meant to be more enduring, beginning before they are sent and ongoing through and beyond their terms overseas. It is organic with what we see taught in the New Testament. The churches are the senders; GM simply facilitates and oversees that sending. We see a thriving global workforce when those two entities work well together.

For our organization, there is one more key entity. All Alliance churches belong to a specific geographic district. Those districts are the ones who license workers (ensuring they are theologically and ministerially fit to serve) and provide various care pieces for all their licensed workers, including those who serve internationally. Every

district office worker has a part to play in nurturing IWs, but it is the key role of the district mobilizers and district superintendents. Working together, we see a beautiful example of Ecclesiastes 4:12, "a cord of three strands is not quickly broken."

The churches are the senders; GM simply facilitates and oversees that sending. We see a thriving global workforce when those two entities work well together.

Specialist Care

Resource professionals are a vital part of care for our IW team, especially when we need to provide responsive/restorative care. These caregivers include medical and psychological/counselling professionals, spiritual directors, life coaches

(especially for [parenting and third culture kid care](#)), educational specialists, and more. In most cases, these are paid professionals, but we also have a handful of folks who use their skills and professional abilities to serve IWs at no cost.

The job of the Member Care Developer is to connect IWs for care when needed and continually build up a network of caregivers willing to serve in this way. So many things can be easily taken for granted in North America, such as access to educational testing, physiotherapy, speech therapy, and counselling services, which are incredibly hard to access in most of our serving locations. Equipped with remote connections, it is incredible how much specialist care and intervention can occur today. We rely heavily on this specialist care, especially in emergency medical situations when every minute counts. Sovereignly overseen and orchestrated by the loving hand of God, we see miracle after miracle occur in the provision of care for global workers. He has been very gracious, and His team of servant specialists very faithful in their outpouring of care.

At any given time in an IWs life, all these factors of care are at play in different ways. With any one area missing, an IW/family suffers. Like Paul's illustration of the body in I Corinthians 12, we all have a significant role to play in the care of global workers, and thus take part in sharing the love of Christ with a dying world.

Preventative Versus Responsive Care

It is crucial to acknowledge the tension any Member Care worker faces as they live out the role God has given them. This tension is between preventative and responsive care, also stated as proactive versus reactive care.

Preventative care entails all the aspects overseen by helping an IW maintain a healthy and resilient life. This would include overseeing administrative details such as finances, insurance, child safety protocols, cost of living evaluations, medical and psychosocial screenings, resource library development and maintenance, to name just a few. To liken it to family life, this is buying the groceries, getting dinner on the table, and paying the bills. It must be done. It is not always exciting, but it is stabilizing and vital by its very rhythmic nature.

Responsive care encompasses any issue arising outside of the day-to-day norm. Sometimes responsive care means dealing with relatively mundane

Preventative care
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items, like intervening when insurance coverage is not as it should be, or helping an IW track down where they can do a follow-up lab test when they do not have access in their location. However, sometimes responsive care takes a more serious turn. This would include medical evacuations, the death of a co-worker, or even IW. In addition, it includes mental health crises, questioning of calling reflections, and even moral failures, which require a disciplinary response from the IWs district.

From broken bones to broken hearts, responsive care can be overwhelming if the caregiver bears the weight of the care on his or herself. Ultimately, the care provider must practice what they preach, relying on Master Care, Self-Care, and Mutual Care to help them remain resilient themselves through pandemics, struggling kids, cancer diagnoses, team conflicts, mental health breakdowns, and even the loss of a worker. In all of these, grief must be attended to, both for the caregiver and the one in crisis. If not, the accumulated grief can take a more profound toll than the crises themselves.

The tension between the two comes when either one overshadows the other. Naturally, responsive care, by its very nature, demands a response. However, using the family home analogy again, the caregiver must also keep in mind that things will be much more complicated if the electric bill is not paid! Maintaining a balance between preventive and responsive care can only be done successfully—meaning without damage to the caregivers themselves—when done in balance and by living out the conviction at the core of my Member Care Ethos: “God is the ultimate Caregiver, who knows my limitations. My capacity is limited; His is limitless. My understanding and discernment are bound by my humanity and time; His wisdom is sovereign and eternal. Therefore, I can trust Him to fill the gaps of my own limitations, always above and beyond what I could have accomplished in my own strength.”

With that in mind, let us look at some of the general ways that care flows to IWs through their time with Global Ministries.

Preventative Flow of Care: Pre-Appointment

Candidate care is overseen by both the candidate developer and their team, which includes Member Care developers. The desire is to move the candidates towards global assignment by the lead team and/or board of directors, which is required for employment. This would encompass many things, but specifically speaking from the care perspective, the following are valuable.

Medical and Psychological Screening

Once an inquirer moves to the candidate stage (which means they have passed their licensing with the district and have a calling to a specific ministry in a specific geographic location), we begin the physical and psychosocial screening associated with the particular location. A third-party provider, International Health Management (IHM) based in Toronto, Ontario, conducts these assessments. They have faithfully served our global team for decades. The screenings conducted are not a part of the IWs employment record. IHM also makes recommendations, including vaccinations required for entry by other countries.

While every cross-cultural location has its unique hardships and special benefits, some places would be considered more difficult than others according to standards used by the governments of Canada or the USA. This would include access to medical care/medications, ongoing geopolitical conflict, educational opportunities, difficulties around travel, cultural limitations relating to gender, or lawful limitations around religious expression.

Through the psychosocial screening battery of assessments, the candidate is helped in identifying areas of resilience and weakness, taking into consideration some of the unique difficulties they have faced, which can help them be more resilient moving forward. If married, the assessments also seek to help identify marital resiliency and areas of vulnerability for the couple to tend. The medical screening likewise helps us determine if an individual can maintain their standard of health in their future location. Some underlying conditions cannot be supported in specific areas, which should be considered by both the candidate and the candidate development team. However, in most cases, a suitable placement can be managed successfully.

Pre-Departure Orientation

Pre-departure orientation (PDO) usually occurs in the late Spring and involves those planning to depart for their assignment sometime in the coming year. It can occur before, during, or after the screening process. PDO usually runs for about seven days and involves several facilitators. Topics are guided by the desired competencies (which in turn were developed by our values). While this is an onboarding in some ways, much of the actual *nuts and bolts* around onboarding occur one-on-one with members of our GM staff. This onboarding is tailored to help the individuals and families adapt to the paradigm shift of living cross-culturally. This will be their first vocational ministry role for many of our candidates, which also requires a change in basic assumptions when thinking and in life rhythms. Topics included are cultural learning and language acquisition,

transition and grief, TCK care, telling your story, building a support team, and the interplay between self-awareness and spiritual formation.

Preventative Flow of Care: Post-Appointment

Once a candidate is approved and appointed by the board of directors, they begin onboarding in several areas, overseen by GM staff. This includes training in financial reporting and assistance with travel planning and visas, among other things. More topics included in this season of time before departure are outlined below.

Medical Insurance

Global Ministries maintains medical insurance coverage for its contracted employees serving overseas, beginning one month before their overseas assignment departure. We work hard to ensure broad coverage and reimbursement as straightforward as possible.

Life Insurance

All active IWs have a life insurance policy. Retired workers also receive a policy reflective of their age and inactive status.

Alliance Retiral Fund (ARF)

All IWs are considered Alliance employees, and contributions to ARF are made. The IW can increase this with personal contributions if they desire. Along with this benefit, financial planners who manage this fund are available at no cost to assist IWs with financial planning needs as requested.

Plan to Protect

The physical and emotional safety of children, both those of our employees and those we serve, is of vital importance to GM and The Alliance Canada. Therefore, all employees complete specific training at the time of their employment and are expected to renew this every four to five years. In addition, as part of our employee contract, all IWs are expected to review the Child Safety and Protection Policy annually, as per our handbook.

Wellness Plan

Training materials are provided to candidates at PDO or earlier. The appointee is encouraged to begin thinking about ways to best maintain wellness and

resilience in their lives. This will require adaptation based on their future overseas assignment. The new IWs will be asked at the time of their yearly evaluation if they have updated their wellness plan, which should give them a few months to consider how to maintain wellness in their new context. This plan is meant to be a living document and can be adapted as needed throughout the year, with accountability from a person of the IW's choosing.

International Health Management

When an IW is one month from departure, we register them with International Health Management. At any time, they can reach out to the doctors, nurses, and other professionals there for confidential and protected assistance while in their overseas location. The health history gathered during the screening phase is invaluable to IHM as they seek to serve families experiencing medical or mental health crises far from their passport country.

Preventative Flow of Care: On the Field

IWs have several resources at their disposal to help them thrive in their overseas assignment.

Curated Resources

An organization is responsible for curating helpful resources for those it shepherds. By using Office 365, we not only have an organizational directory, which significantly increases peer-to-peer communication and support, we also have several resources on SharePoint. One of these is the Member Care Resource Library which includes resources ranging from TCK care, community life, spiritual formation, a list of counsellors, and self-assessment tools. Over twenty-five files contain hundreds of documents, article and book recommendations, and links.

Shepherding Care

As previously mentioned, the shepherding care of regional directors, team developers, and team leaders happens in various ways, but it is worth mentioning again what a vital part of our Member Care plan it is.

Focus on Cultural Competency and Language Acquisition

We have an organizational value to enter new contexts as learners, thus we put a high emphasis on learning language and gaining cultural competency before engaging in full-time ministry. This ranges from one to two years, depending on

context and language difficulty. Most IWs continue learning deeper layers of language alongside their ministry engagement after that.

Sending Church Visits and Ministry Engagement

This looks different from team to team. However, having a small group from the sending church determine what would be helpful to the team and how they might serve for a week or two can often help to educate the sending church on how to better partner with their IWs in prayer, encouragement, and future ministry. The whole team needs to be engaged, and the team leader a part of any planning or trip discussion. A well-informed, intentional visit by a sending church can revitalize the whole team. A trip that does not involve the team leader or consider the context and current team needs can put undue stress and pressure on a team. Good communication, praying together, and discerning listening contribute to a successful short-term trip for both those visiting and those receiving.

Education Plans and TCK Care

Each family submits an annual education plan for each child. They are guided by their leaders and, when needed, Member Care to ensure each child meets Canadian standards, assessing any gaps that need to be addressed. Additionally, GM has developed a living document about [TCKs stage by stage](#), which includes tips and insights to help parents shepherd their children to receive God's love and love Him with heart, soul, mind, and strength.

Preventative Flow of Care: Return to Canada

From the Canadian perspective, it must seem like IWs are excited to return "home." And while in most cases this is somewhat, if not largely accurate, there are often mixed feelings about this transition. Here are some facts to consider:

- Returning for a one-year home assignment means packing up and storing possessions in their assignment country. Whether for a family or for a single person, this is no small task.
- It is essential for any ministry responsibilities and relational connections (for each family member) to be tended to well.
- Plans must be made for living temporarily in Canada, usually for one year. A rental needs to be obtained and furniture and other household needs. Usually, the family also needs assistance locating and paying for a vehicle.
- Children are anticipating transitioning to a new school and sometimes

school in a new language - English! Therefore, this is a wonderful opportunity to assess if the overseas school meets educational needs. Still, parents need to pay attention to the child's emotional needs as well.

- Climate and cultural shifts are also experienced by each family member. Therefore, re-learning cultural norms and getting up to date with what is new in Canada and in the local churches can provide a steep learning curve.

Variety of Care Programs

Home Ministries

Most IWs return in the summer, so we run a retreat in August. This Home Ministries Retreat (HMR) helps parents and children pay attention to the gains and losses surrounding this transition. Peer-to-peer encouragement, prayer, and learning are among the greatest assets of this time, alongside several gifted resource people. Then, beginning in September, we unpack the *nuts and bolts* of home ministries through a series of monthly connections. We do this remotely, with consistent small group times and various topics and facilitators engaged in helping IWs live out their work for this unique year.

Transition Materials

While everyone experiences transitions of sorts, IWs face a uniquely high amount, and paying attention to the emotional and spiritual aspects surrounding this facet of IW life is vital to long-term resilience. We talk a great deal about paying attention to the gains and losses of transition. We offer several models to reflect on, book and article suggestions, and resources as needed to help people navigate through seasons of change.

Psychosocial Debriefing

All IWs meet with a psychologist for a debriefing once every four to five years at the time of their home assignment.

Medical Clearance Screening

All IWs repeat basic medical assessments through IHM for each family member. Preventative medical care and screening are minimal to nonexistent in many contexts. These screenings often reveal small things requiring attention and less frequently serious health concerns that need to be addressed. At this time, vaccinations are also updated as needed and recommended by IHM and

in coordination with the individual's family doctor. Medical clearance screening benefits the organization by hopefully avoiding an expensive and intense future medical evacuation. Still, more importantly, the goal is to spare individuals and families from the disruption and possibly severe implications coming from an unknown medical issue.

Plan-to-Protect and Child Safety

This training is renewed during the home assignment. It is also important for the IW to follow through on any specific requirements their district might have in this area.

Administrative Details

The GM staff have developed many resources and are willing to assist an IW in following through on any specific administrative details unique to their home assignment.

Self-Care

An IW has a personal responsibility to see to it they are in accordance with requirements around things like tax reporting, provincial residency, and provincial insurance. We can try to answer questions or find resource people willing to assist with questions, but this is a personal responsibility. We also encourage IWs to consider renewing their will, power of attorney, or guardianships (if children are involved) at this time. This is an excellent time to re-evaluate financial planning, future educational needs, and needs of family members (especially aging parents) and formulate plans to engage in these new shifts in their family dynamics.

Unique Seasons of Transition

Special provisions are available when a home assignment coincides with the launch of a young adult child or the conclusion or retirement from Global Ministries.

We offer a re-entry training week run by a third-party resource team for graduating students launching into independence. We also provide debriefing and follow-up counselling to assist young adults with their transition. Each young adult who has returned to Canada is also given a return round trip to visit their parent's overseas location prior to age twenty-two. We also offer scholarship funds that can be accessed by our TCKs, a fund that can be supported by extended family members or local churches.

Concluding with GM ideally involves three concepts: reflection, planning, and celebration. For retiring and concluding adults, we attempt to give them good

places to process and debrief not only their last term but a career or season of serving overseas. This allows them to reflect with a wise and discerning listener. We also provide materials to help them process this transition. The more years we serve with GM, the more danger we face finding our identity in the role. Paying attention to the new invitation of the Spirit for the season ahead is part of this reflection time.

Every retirement and conclusion has its own specific nuances. After listening well to the individual/family, we try to come alongside for resourcing and benefits. Preparing for retirement from GM after fifteen or more years doesn't begin at age fifty, or even fifty-five. Instead, we encourage all IWs to start considering their retiral planning even as they begin serving with GM. Associated with our ARF, every IW has access to a financial planner willing to guide them through their seasons of family life and investment, all the while keeping in mind the goal of retiral financial stability. Also, every qualifying retiring IW has a life insurance policy maintained by GM until their passing.

We want to celebrate the time served with GM, whether for a season or a career of service. This is usually done in the region at large group events and in their location of service with their team and community. Upon returning to Canada, their service is generally recognized by the district. For many retiring IWs, this season marks a high level of engagement within the district in mentoring, pulpit supply, and volunteer mobilization. Every qualifying retiring IW is also invited to the next available General Assembly to add an additional closure and community celebration event.

Restorative Flow of Care

This segment will contain fewer details because, by nature, the answer must be specifically tailored to the situation or crisis needing a response.

Health Emergencies

A health emergency for anyone overseas can be confusing or scary, depending on the circumstances. We try to mitigate these factors by encouraging the IW to connect immediately with IHM and Member Care for resourcing. Working with our insurance team, we seek to find the best care at the closest location. When needed, IHM determines if evacuation to Canada is necessary. Occasionally health emergencies require temporary or permanent repatriation back to Canada.

Psychosocial Needs

As mentioned before, the high number of stressors and griefs associated with cross-cultural life, in addition to occasional traumatic events, can cause the need for psychological therapeutic care. We are committed to assisting IWs access faith-based and professionally accredited care which is a good fit for them. Sometimes this means accessing overseas-based providers, and sometimes providers from their home province. When needed, Member Care connects with the individual to assess if the provider meets their needs and help shift care if required.

Spiritual Needs

Sometimes, an IW would benefit from spiritual direction, soul care, pastoral care after a recent trauma, or challenging work experience. When welcomed by the individual, and sometimes in cooperation with their sending church, we seek to connect them with spiritual guidance. Member Care, regional developers, and teammates can also provide this type of care in some situations.

Discipline-Related Care

International workers are human. And sometimes, they make mistakes that have a broad impact on themselves, their families, their supporters, and their ministries. This may be related to a moral failure of some sort. It may be related to a breach in our *Call to Excellence* or *Code of Conduct*.

Whatever the reason for discipline, the deep desire of all who come alongside for care is for holistic restoration to be attained for the good of the individual/family and the glory of God. A discipline process is overseen by the individual's district superintendent, in coordination with GM and the sending church, and in keeping within the guidelines of The Alliance Canada's Manual. Member Care's responsibility is to provide restorative opportunities to engage with counseling, spiritual direction, soul care, accountability, and help guide the individual(s) in reporting back to the district superintendent. The ultimate goal in any discipline-related process is to see individuals and families more closely walking in relationship with Christ and His Body. Ultimately, this can only be achieved through both the work of the Holy Spirit and response to this work.

Conclusion

This is an exhaustive list of topics, yet it really just skims the surface of everything involved in helping workers not only maintain but even more so thrive emotionally, spiritually, mentally, and physically in their overseas context. It is

more than one person, couple, or even team can maintain. Thankfully, the work is the Lord's, and He not only oversees it but also brings His will about even through our limitations and capacities because of His deep love for His people and for a waiting, unbelieving world.

For Further Reading



***Doing Member Care Well: Perspectives and Practices from Around the World* by Kelly S. O'Donnell**

This book explores how member care is being practiced around the world to equip sending organizations as they intentionally support their mission/aid personnel. The information provided includes personal accounts, guidelines, case studies, worksheets, and practical advice from all over the globe.

Chapter 10

Qualities of Good Team Leaders

by Richard Enns

Leadership is a key component to the advancement and completion of the Great Commission. Workers are still obediently going among those who desperately need to hear and respond to the Gospel. With the limited resources of the sending church, whether from the West or Global South, the importance of caring for these workers¹ and teams², both full time and in the marketplace, largely falls under the role of the appointed team leader³, ideally in close proximity.

Having served in missions for some thirty years, spanning different continents, countries, people groups, languages, and roles, this chapter, focusing on qualities of a good team leader, draws mainly from my personal experiences and observations. While a plethora of books on leadership exists, my discourse here will highlight the practical side of leadership, which promotes healthy and thriving team dynamics proven to transcend time, geography, variances in vision, purposes, and a leader's particular management style.

Over many decades of observation, certain elements have surfaced. Current leaders must pay closer attention to the increasingly volatile and harsh global environments, coupled with limited resources and access. Thus, effective team leaders must also factor in the workers' needs, including the sense of belonging to a community, concrete affirmation, and a trustworthy member care program. In short, the sending church or organization needs to operate from the premise that "people (the worker) are our greatest resource." Therefore, the receiving team and team leaders must be good stewards of these workers and effectively create a culture wherein these women and men thrive.

1. worker = those sent or commissioned by a church or organization to advance the Gospel in another cross-cultural context. This can span from those who are fully supported by donations to those who are self-supported in the marketplace.

2. team = those who work together in a cross-cultural context toward a common ministry goal. They may or may not be sent by the same organization, but have a collective tie necessitating collaboration.

3. team leader = someone who has a formal, recognized leadership role over other workers or a team of workers.

The following leadership qualities are central to creating, maintaining, and growing healthy workers and teams in the cross-cultural mission context. My comments and illustrations are offered to give context and suggested application.

Pastoral Heart: Shepherd

In order to complete the task of the Great Commission, workers must be sent to increasingly complex places and to people more hostile to the message and messenger. This can lead to a volatile, unstable life for workers. Pandemics, coups d'états, Arab Springs, economic shifts, displaced peoples, moral and ethical testings testify to the global ruptures and groaning. Into this arena enters the "sent one," whether full-time or as a marketplace worker⁴, bringing their own personal baggage potentially filled with issues such as abuse, broken marriages, estranged family members, hurts, and fears.

In actuality, this is the same procedure from when Jesus sent out and commissioned His initial workers. The biblical formula was "broken men and women for a broken world." Those first apostles, flawed and yet faithful, were launched into a similar hostile scenario.

One never forgets the lessons during their initial years in the cross-cultural context. Throughout our years in ministry, my wife and I have witnessed the consequences of team leaders whose focus was primarily on reaching the locals with little attention to the workers. Our colleagues faced huge family, health, and spiritual issues, but they had no place, no ear to hear, and no shoulder to lean into. Visits by our leaders were seldom. The unspoken value was that you had to be tough and push through alone or go home. Sadly, the toll began to show as avoidable attrition set in among the workers. Had leaders stepped in and demonstrated appropriate care and concern, perhaps these hurting workers could have survived and stayed. During these initial years, we knew leaders, including us, needed to shift their leadership approach. And so began our thirty-year journey of making sure our leadership approach promoted a culture of healthy and thriving workers.

Topping the list of essential team leader qualities is the need for a pastoral heart. John's record of the life of Jesus concludes with His last encounter with Peter. Jesus was about to leave His earthly ministry and needed His workers, like Peter, to not miss the basics of what it meant to be an apostle. Jesus' final

4. marketplace worker = a professional employed globally and living as salt and light in that global context (e.g. baker, teacher, consultant, restaurant owner, etc.)

advice was to “Feed my lambs ... take care of my sheep ... feed my sheep” (John 21:15-17). Workers, just like any other sheep, require shepherding. Cross-cultural front-line workers of the Gospel need battlefield care.

I recall many times attempting to promote the value of caring for team members and peers. Often the conversation started with, “...I am not here to care or serve my teammates. I am here only for the locals. My purpose is to fulfill the vision, which does not include caring for my colleagues.” Team leaders must incorporate the biblical value of what it means to shepherd those within their care. The leader needs to assume this role and actively seek ways to minister to those under their care. Granted, some organizations have designated member care personnel and resources, but it is the front-line leader who can be the first to respond and make sure the sheep are fed and taken care of. Nothing replaces those onsite and in proximity.

Personally, we have served as team leaders and regional leaders. Sometimes the direct oversight was only a handful of family units. Other times, our circle included dozens of units spread over two continents and many countries. Yet, our approach has always been to care for the whole person, no matter their position or line of authority. For example, whenever we are with one of our team members, we purposefully address the various aspects of their lives, not just their ministry. “How is the family? Children? Extended family? Are you able to get away as a couple or single? What has God been saying to you during your quiet times with Him? Are you able to exercise? What do you do to relax?”

When face to face is not possible, one of the best tools we have used is a two-page fillable document called a “monthly check-in.” Before our contact, the worker responds to a set of open-ended questions, which help direct the later call. Divided into two sections, the first section addresses “How are you feeling?” with an image of a coffee cup and four markers: “Physically I’m feeling __; Spiritually I’m feeling __; Emotionally I’m feeling __; Relationally I’m feeling __.” They grade themselves by answering either “I feel like my cup is: 1. full and hot; 2. over 1/2 full and good; 3. 1/2 full and maintaining; 4. less than 1/2 full and cooling; or 5. to the dregs and cold.”

The rest of the check-in asks about activities, struggles, and issues to be discussed. As team leaders, just knowing their “cup” levels sets the tone and direction of the conversation. Often, I would have ministry or administration issues requiring attention, but having heard their hearts set the tone and pace of the call.

As leaders, we immerse ourselves as much into the lives of those under our care and authority as possible. Leaders need to devote significant amounts of

time to developing a relationship with their colleagues. One of the most enjoyable aspects of our role as leaders is the opportunity to visit the workers. We would be amiss if the bulk of the time was business only. Our visits were primarily focused on deepening relationships. This would include times with the whole family, visiting in their homes, talking and playing with their kids, enjoying meals together, and allowing our hearts to be knit together. I have witnessed leaders attempting to deal with complex issues with little foundational relationship. Some of the most critical conversations are not had in the official debriefs, but in the evenings sitting in their homes, coffee in hand, hearing their hearts.

Trustworthy

Flowing directly from the shepherd quality is the byproduct of deep cultivated relationships between leader and worker. Perhaps the greatest test of leaders is when they utter, “just trust me.” So often, I have had to make unpopular decisions and could not explain or defend my reasons for doing so. I needed the worker to trust me and accept the decision with open hands.

Trust is in short supply in the current climate, especially towards leaders. The present flavour of our Western culture is a call for greater transparency, especially among the authorities. Perhaps social media has fueled this desire, but it is a poor platform for true relationships. Leaders need to understand that being transparent and authentic are the foundations of trust. And trust is earned and built over time.

Early on in my career, a regional leader paid his first visit. Among the many topics of orientation, one piece of advice stands out. He reached into his pocket and pulled out a handful of coins. “These coins add up to one dollar. At the start of your leadership position, you have been given one dollar worth of trust. Soon you will need to spend some trust coins as you make decisions that may not be popular. Some of these decisions will cost you a quarter, others a dime. Unless you intentionally replenish your trust currency, one day, you will need to make a nickel decision, something minor, but you may run out of trust coins. Leaders can’t make decisions without earned trust. So be smart and keep earning trust.”

I have witnessed many good team leaders who failed to build trust and then faced a rebellion in their ranks while scratching their heads. On the other side, there are those leaders who make poor decisions but are quickly forgiven and afforded more grace, all because they sowed and reaped trust among their team members.

Crisis Manager

While notable team leaders are good shepherds for the daily rhythms of a cross-cultural worker, there will come those moments when they need to deal with a crisis. It may be personal, family, relational, team-related, political, health issues, evacuation, or death. After years of cross-cultural ministry, I can attest to dealing with these examples of crisis multiple times, often in succession. There will be those moments when a team leader will receive “the call” in the middle of the night or may sense a growing issue has now turned into a crisis demanding immediate action.

It is in these crisis moments that leaders are tested the most. This is when we must “carry each other’s burden” (Galatians 6:2). A good team leader will seize the crisis, dissect the main causes, discern the course of action, and lead the charge others will follow. For several years, I taught a course for mission leaders on crisis management and have made several observations.

First, those who performed best in a crisis were able to take charge, mindful of the shepherding needs. Decisions, often challenging ones, need to be made in quick succession, no matter one’s leadership style in a crisis. Policies and contingency plans make sense on paper, but implementing them without causing further emotional and relational harm requires team leaders to consider the pastoral care elements. Often this is where trust coins are quickly used up, so make sure your bank account is topped up!

Second, those leaders who are most successful in leading through a crisis were prepared. Prior to any crisis event, they prepared their teams for possibilities. Discussions, possible scenarios, and eventual guidelines and plans were recorded and agreed upon by all. The moment a crisis hits, the team leader will be able to reference these guidelines and enact the actionable items but now have the space to inject the member care elements that are most often unwritten.

Finally, those leaders who fared the best in a crisis knew their limits, were able to deal with pressure, and had a deep dependency on the Spirit’s guidance. These attributes are not suddenly acquired in a crisis but are developed before the storm. If leaders self-identify they may lack knowledge or ability regarding a potential crisis issue, they will seek resources and people to fill that gap. Minor crisis issues will afford telltale indications of how leaders fare in their decision-making process, their ability to deal with the weight and the depth of a relationship with God.

It is in these crisis moments that leaders are tested the most.

Builder

Another quality team leaders must exhibit is being a builder. In most cases, team leaders inherit the members of their team. Drafting and vetting team members before they arrive in-country is most often not an option. The challenge of a team leader is knowing how to come alongside a collection of workers and create a vibrant, healthy, synchronizing team that has a Kingdom impact.

Therefore, a team leader should be able to discern and parse out the various personalities, determine what gifts need to be utilized and affirmed, and identify what ingredients and talents are lacking. Early on, a team leader should implement a training session whereby the members are put on a trajectory of self-discovery while gaining a measure of understanding and appreciation for their teammates. There are various tools on personality and gifting available, but knowing when to implement them in the team's development is key.

In one team scenario, their growth numerically outpaced their growth relationally. Personality clashes abounded, and misunderstandings mounted. As the regional leader, I was called in as an outsider to help "fix" the issue. I quickly identified the team leaders never led them in any exercise to help them to self-identify their own personalities, never mind helping them appreciate the uniqueness of their teammates. Conflicts were a mixture and overlap of issues, including generational and educational differences, cultural and mother tongue gaps, and families and singles perspectives. I needed to begin slowly, working through the various layers. This was not a quick fix, but it did require establishing foundational truth. During one of the sessions where I decided to utilize a simple personality test, I saw lights turn on. It was as if at the moment many team members were finally able to claim publicly how God had made them; members began their journey of expressing their appreciation for their uniqueness.

Team leaders are often tasked with vision casting and building. Yet no vision can be realized without an adequately built team. The more solid a foundation is laid, the more the team can sustain and have capacity.

Equipper

Part of the builder concept is also being an equipper. A team leader desires to build a team that then allows ongoing equipping. Perhaps the word of a house construction is apropos. The team is a house. It has a structure, materials, organization, and function. The building of a team is the initial cement foundation and roughing in the walls and roof. Equipping is like furnishings, chairs, beds, and appliances. A team leader will be actively seeking out and offering their team

members the tools, the resources, and the latest equipment to make the work more effective and efficient. There is no place to house the equipment without a minimal structural building.

One of the signs of a quality worker I look for is their pursuit of excellence and an attitude of lifelong learning. Leaders will then be able to equip them as there is an established track and posture. At least once a year, team leaders should sit down with each team member and plan their learning pursuits. The conversation should include an honest look into both where they are presently equipped and functioning, as well as areas they lack and need to sharpen. For example, I have sat in these equipping moments and found many workers will simply gravitate towards affirming what they already know and are adept at. A teacher will look to a course about teaching, or a medical worker will often only look for another course in a medical procedure. Yet, what they truly need is a seminar on conflict management or how to communicate with supporters. These are critical inputs team leaders need to have with each worker so they “equip his people for works of service” (Ephesians 4:10-12).

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Identifier

It is in this vein of being a builder and equipper where the issue of preparing the next generation of leadership emerges. Unfortunately, over the last number of decades, there seems to be a decline in those who desire or aspire to any leadership level. There are many reasons for this shyness, but perhaps one tried and true solution is current team leaders intentionally building and equipping those who are potential leaders.

Survey any leader today, and they will testify about someone in their life who purposefully influenced and mentored them. For the mission leader, we have a natural training ground and relational opportunity within our teams to identify and equip emerging leaders. Team leaders should be praying and seeking out those on their teams who are potential and natural leaders. There should be an intentional plan and purpose to allow these individuals to explore, experience, and be affirmed in leadership.

During our first year, barely speaking the local language, I was cast into a

cross-cultural setting way beyond my Western experience and education. Yet, the saving grace was being paired with a local pastor. I travelled extensively with him and saw him minister. I was often clueless as to why he acted or spoke as he did, but he modelled for me what it means to be a leader in his culture. And then he allowed me, a young worker, to get my hands dirty, stand up before the crowds, stumble around, and falter often. He saw something in me I did not see. Team leaders need to do this for their team members.

Visionary

In most teams, there is a shared ministry vision. Goals, action steps, and measurements cascade from these visions. This preferred future drives these men and women to leave their home nations and immerse themselves in their host cultures. The power of the vision initially captures the worker's heart, but it is the nurturing of the vision that propels them forward. Team leaders need to be keepers of the vision.

The complexity of cross-cultural engagement often clouds the vision. Life takes over. Housing, visas, schooling, and maintaining health may take precedence over the ministry's vision. Eventually, if the vision is not adequately attended to, the worker may throw up their hands and cry, "what am I doing here? I am just wasting my time!" Team leaders, this is where you are the vision keeper for the team.

A vision keeper is one who not only understands the vision statement and can articulate it but intentionally and continually reiterates, restates, and reframes it. In addition, team leaders should emphasize why the team is here and how the team's actions contribute towards the preferred future.

One of the challenges facing teams and team leaders is when workers either never accept the vision or lose sight of the vision. If team leaders neglect the common vision, workers will naturally insert their own agendas. If left unchecked, team members will often drift, exhibiting disinterest in the team and favouring their side projects. Teams often face high attrition rates due to the trend towards shorter ministry commitment. With each new team member, the vision needs to be revisited and reaffirmed often. Historical vision needs to be a present reality. Team leaders need to be vision keepers.

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Communicator

Another timeless quality of effective workers and team leaders is good communication skills. As team leaders are tasked with the qualities mentioned above, each is inherently tied to being a good communicator. Transmitting vision, promoting and executing change, building and equipping workers, migrating through a crisis, and shoulder tapping potential leaders all require leaders to develop good listening skills and the ability of “speaking the truth in love” (Ephesians 4:15).

One of the differences between a leader and a good leader is the ability to “hear” what is not spoken. Some workers are excellent and forthright in speaking their hearts, but many are unable or unwilling to express their concerns aloud. As a team leader, I receive countless communications via emails, texts, and other social media platforms. Each medium and electronic message demands greater care than an oral conversation. I am learning to interpret not only the issue but what are the unspoken motives. Equally as critical is my response and interaction. The rule of thumb is the higher the intensity of the issue, the greater the care in which words are chosen. Many times, emails are edited repeatedly before being sent and many only responded to with a covering of prayer.

Team leaders should be able to draw out the issue behind the issue from workers. There are many occasions when a worker’s response is un-Christlike. Perhaps a word or phrase is misspoken. A negative feeling is expressed out of context, like a bubble floating in the air which drifts away and pops afar. A good quality of a team leader is to not only see those “bubbles” but capture them and explore the source. Many conflicts could have been dealt with before they escalated if only team leaders had addressed them when the early signs were noted.

One of the differences between a leader and a good leader is the ability to “hear” what is not spoken.

Able to Manage Diversity

Team leading has always been about managing diversity. The collaboration of just two individuals, for example, in marriage, requires understanding and appreciating personality differences, celebrating cultural upbringings, and allowances in perspectives being equally valid. Teams inherently are comprised of a mixture of ages, experiences, and education. Ministry teams add cultural

backgrounds, mother tongues, and world-views to the list. Thus, team dynamics, beyond the building and equipping, requires team leaders to navigate diversity.

Team leaders should be cultural interpreters of their host culture and their teams. Most of the teams I have been part of or have led have included diverse cultures. The error has been the majority culture often ignoring minority cultures within their teams. This has been one

of the breeding grounds for conflict. Thus, team leaders need to be proactive in acknowledging the diversity and allowing it to shape the team.

Fellowship and authority are likely two of the most apparent differences on most teams. How team members fellowship creates unity. A worker may not come from a culture where playing board games is practiced. If the only fellowship time is around game night, the team member may never be integrated. Common fellowship practices need to be discovered and encouraged by team leaders. The same for authority structures. Age versus majority votes is antithesis. Western workers may feel comfortable with an appointed young woman to be their team leader, but someone from the Global South may favour age and experience. Team leaders need to navigate these waters in order to build, equip, and lead a healthy and thriving diverse team.

A final point regarding diversity, and likely the most critical in my years of team ministry, is the prominence of couple leaders. I have been incredibly blessed in most of my leadership scenarios, for I have co-led with my wife. Granted, many cultures are still male-dominated, and I had to take the lead. Yet, co-leading with my spouse has allowed me to lean into my male perspective while my wife offers a woman's heart and passion. As a habit, we debrief after each meeting with a team or a member. "What did you hear? What did you sense? I missed that!" As regional leaders, we travelled and ministered together in many countries, depending on each other's unique abilities. On the rare chance we needed to make a solo trip, we were definitely handicapped and missed "reading the signs" our spouse would have naturally picked up on. Considering the majority of cross-cultural workers are female should provoke organizations and sending agencies in embracing a couple leader model.

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within their teams.

Conclusion

Obviously, this topic needs more attention than a single chapter. Yet it is with humbleness I offer my observations and suggestions to the reader. My attempt is not to set an unattainable bar, but to call leaders to pay attention to the care dimension of the team dynamic. All of these qualities are ones I am growing in and constantly addressing. The offer is to reflect on some of these qualities and press into the ones relevant to you. Finally, I urge you to seek out mentors and peer team leaders who will “spur one another on toward love and good deeds” (Hebrews 10:24).

“Now may the God of peace— who brought up from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, and ratified an eternal covenant with his blood— may he equip you with all you need for doing his will. May he produce in you, through the power of Jesus Christ, every good thing that is pleasing to him. All glory to him forever and ever! Amen” (Hebrews 13:20-22 NLT⁵).

5. *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

Chapter 11

Ten Common Challenges

by Jacky Lau

International workers (IWs) encounter many challenges in responding to the missionary call. One out of eighteen (or 5.5 percent) of IWs from new sending countries¹ left their posts due to preventable reasons² each year, according to a study by 455 mission agencies with 23,000 workers in 1992-94 (Hay et al. 2007, 12). For the past twenty years, IWs from the A4 regions³ have become a significant force in frontier missions. Missionary movements in challenging areas will run out of steam if the workers do not have sufficient support strategies to address their challenges. Therefore, improving missionary retention and resiliency is a crucial member care goal for mission agencies and sending churches.

This chapter aims to present ten common challenges faced by IWs and offer practical strategies to overcome potential difficulties. *International worker* refers to all vocational missionaries and tentmakers⁴ serving in mission fields with considerable or no support from their mission agencies or sending churches.

International workers serving in Creative Access Countries⁵ in the 10/40 Window⁶ frequently encounter significant difficulties. New IWs who are not connected with or not supported by agencies are more vulnerable to struggles in the field. Researchers have conducted studies on field challenges in the past two decades (Carter 1999, Hay et al. 2007, Lau 2017, Narita 2018). Based on these studies and field observations, the following ten common challenges are identified in Figure 1.

1. Countries other than from Europe or North America.

2. Preventable reasons include personal, family and team problems; Unpreventable reasons include retirement, death in service and project completion.

3. A4 regions include Africa, Asia, Arabic-Turkic, and America-Latina (O'Donnell 2011).

4. Marketplace worker (e.g. a professional employed globally and living as salt and light in that global context)

5. Countries that do not allow open mission work and require creative means to gain entry.

6. The 10/40 Window is the rectangular area of North Africa, the Middle East and Asia approximately between 10 degrees north and 40 degrees north latitude. (Joshua Project)

Figure 1
Ten Common Challenges (Lau 2017)

1. Cultural Adjustments
2. Spiritual Loneliness
3. Family Issues
4. Language Skill
5. Fatigue, Sickness and Stress
6. Financial Shortage
7. Lack of Support and Training
8. Children’s Education
9. Role Changes and Calling
10. Conflict and Disunity

Throughout this chapter, we will briefly discuss these ten common challenges and offer practical strategies to overcome them.

Cultural Adjustments

The term *culture* in this section includes “the beliefs, customs, arts, etc., of a particular society.” Cultural adjustments are the most common challenges identified by IWs serving in a cross-cultural environment. Asian IWs serving in the Middle East point out how the host Islamic culture differs significantly from their home culture. They must adjust to the local ways of living (e.g., hot summer, fasting during Ramadan, driving, relating to local officials, etc.). They also must learn the diverse sub-cultures of the local and diaspora people they serve.

Long-term IWs often experience uncertainty, confusion, or anxiety in this culture shock and require more time to adjust to a new environment. There are five common cultural adjustment stages (Attitude 2018): 1) Honeymoon/Tourist, 2) Distress/Crisis, 3) Re-integration, 4) Autonomy, and 5) Independence. We recommend the following strategies for a better transition:

- Mission leaders and potential IWs should develop a good knowledge of the culture of the people group they are called to work with. Whenever possible, they should take an exploratory trip to the new field and experience the host culture and sub-cultures before moving into the region.
- Mission leaders should visit new IWs as soon as they relocate into the new country. Invite IWs to join a like-minded Christian community (church or

mission team) where they can communicate with their mother tongue as they worship God, meet new friends, and learn about local cultures. Network new IWs with veteran IWs willing to offer practical ways to help them and their families transition well to a new living and ministry environment.

- Encourage new IWs to adopt a learner posture of new cultures. Help them to view culture in four levels: behaviour, values, beliefs, and worldview (Kwast 2009, 397-399). During the Honeymoon/Tourist stage, new IWs are encouraged to take public transportation, visit museums, dine at local restaurants, attend wedding celebrations, and visit homes of local families. They should take photos to capture interesting moments or scenery with their fresh pair of eyes. New IWs should be discouraged from travelling outside their fields during the first year (or first term) of ministry in order to focus on their initial cultural adjustment.
- Help new IWs become familiar with their host countries' conservative values, such as gender issues, social and religious practices, and implications relating to proselytization.
- The goal of cultural adjustment is to help new IWs be mindful of the effects of culture shock, have a smooth transition as they enter a new culture, and learn culturally appropriate ways to share God's love and Jesus Christ.

Spiritual Loneliness

International workers experience spiritual dryness and loneliness, especially when they live in isolated places and serve alone in unfamiliar, and sometimes hostile, locations. "Spiritual dryness can lead us to wander...without direction, hope, vision, and, most importantly, without the sustaining relationship of the Father" (Hicks 2002, 199). Single and younger IWs earnestly look forward to receiving spiritually mature visitors who are willing to share their life and ministry experiences. Tentmaking IWs who are married and have children often struggle to have quiet time and personal devotions. Most IWs desire to deepen their walk with Christ and long for God's presence and encouragement through fellowship, Bible study, and prayer meetings with other like-minded IWs. Many miss biblical teaching and revival meetings offered by their home churches.

We recommend the following strategies to encourage IWs to revitalize their spiritual being:

- Encourage IWs to build a close relationship with God and to seek the filling of the Holy Spirit through consistent spiritual disciplines such as Bible reading, prayer, fasting, evangelism, retreat, etc.

- New IWs should connect with a local church or fellowship to worship God. If no Christian community is near their location, encourage IWs to worship God at home and invite other IWs to join. Married IWs should also establish private worship with their children.
- Team leaders should meet with new IWs periodically and encourage them to conduct weekly small group or team meetings to worship God and encourage each other. Network new IWs with other like-minded IWs with similar family backgrounds so they can build friendships, organize joint family activities, discuss ministries, and pray for each other.
- Encourage IWs to attend in-country or regional networking meetings and conferences so they can celebrate what God has been doing in their region, building courage and rapport with like-minded IWs and Christian communities.
- IWs should establish accountability prayer partners and set up prayer support networks inside and outside their countries. Join global prayer movements and participate in regional prayer events hosted by Christian communities in the field.

Family Issues

Having a strong family relationship is a core value held by many cultures. IWs, especially those from the A4 regions, value and desire loving relationships with their families. Common family issues include:

1. single IWs experiencing parental pressure to get married
2. married IWs in an unhealthy spousal relationship
3. married IWs facing parental pressure to have children
4. IWs contending with challenges in raising children and teenagers
5. IWs' responsibilities in caring for their elderly or sick parents in their home countries.

Young IWs need mature IWs to serve as role models and walk alongside them when facing difficult family issues relating to their marriage, parents, in-laws, children, celibacy, sexual orientation, etc. They can invite trusted IWs and Christian leaders to counsel and pray for them when they face family crises.

We recommend the following strategies to encourage IWs to address their potential family issues:

- Encourage single IWs to live a Christ-centered life with contentment and purity while seeking God's guidance on the possibility and timing of getting married. Develop opportunities and assist single IWs to meet with other

like-minded Christian singles.

- Assist married IWs in learning how the emotional, physical, and sexual union of a husband and a wife reflects the complete unity of the Triune God. Encourage them to place a high priority on building a healthy married relationship centred on God’s love. If their spousal relationship is not healthy, all other relationships will eventually be at risk.
- Encourage married IW couples to set aside quality time to date their spouse and attend special training/retreats on marriage enrichment (e.g., Family Life retreats) and how to raise their third culture kids (TCKs) in the field.
- Encourage IWs to love and honour their parents while maintaining a sense of independence from them (Genesis 2:24; Ephesians 6:2). Consider asking their sending church to visit and care for their aging parents in their home countries.

Language Skills

English is the common trade language used in many countries inside the 10/40 Window. IWs understand the importance of learning fluent English to live and minister in the field. IWs should acquire a certain level of fluency in conversational English before or shortly after they come to the field. Besides learning English, IWs participating in frontier missions will also need to learn the heart language of the people group they serve. At least one IW in a mission team should be fluent in the local language (Allen et al. 2009, 75). Proficient language and communication skills are valuable assets that enable IWs to function well in a culturally diverse and globalized mission field.

All potential IWs should acquire a good command of English before being sent to the field. They should follow the principle of “learn a little and use a lot” to improve their language abilities. International workers whose mother tongue is not English should be encouraged to connect with English-speaking Christians in the field so they can improve their English, build friendships, and pray for each other. Cross-cultural IWs should focus on learning the local language full-time for at least one year through cultural centres, private tutors, or a language school located in their mission field. Mission leaders should prioritize visiting and caring for IWs and their families when they study the local language full-time.

Fatigue, Sickness and Stress

Life inside the 10/40 Window can be very demanding. Foreign workers and tentmaking IWs typically have heavy workloads and work long hours. IWs from the A4 regions, newlywed couples, and IWs with children face more significant challenges in balancing ministries and healthy living. Many of them have a high view of work but fail to observe Sabbath. As a result, they often develop fatigue and sickness. Tentmaking IWs face stresses both in their ministry and at their workplace. They can also experience the challenge of living a life of integrity at work and, at the same time, demonstrating Christ's love to their friends and adversaries.

Health professionals identify seven types of missionary stresses: cultural, people, agency, physical, psychological, support, and spiritual (O'Donnell & O'Donnell 1992). If these stresses are not reduced or adequately managed, IWs will experience burnout, leading to impatience, loss of joy, reduced ministry effectiveness, depression, sickness, and premature departure from the field.

We recommend the following strategies to assist IWs to improve their physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being:

- Encourage and keep IWs accountable to faithfully observe Sabbath weekly and enjoy being with the Lord through spiritual disciplines including prayer, fasting, Scripture reading, etc. Help IWs to be joyful in Christ and maintain a positive outlook in life.
- Encourage them to exercise regularly and celebrate small successes and significant occasions with other IWs. Assist IWs with obtaining proper medical insurance coverage for their families. Accompany them to doctor's appointments or visit them when they are sick. Counsel them if they return to their home countries to treat significant illnesses.
- Assist IWs to establish clear and healthy margins in life and ministry. Margin is defined as "a sufficient reserve of time, energy (spiritual, emotional, interpersonal, and physical), and money to provide for [one's own] needs and the needs of others." (Williams 2000, 196). Help IWs to recognize early signs of burnout⁷, acknowledge they may have a problem, encourage them to give others permission to speak into their lives (Ephesians 4:25), and be willing to adjust their life schedule and ministry loads to maintain emotional, physical, and spiritual health.
- Maintain regular contact with IWs who have signs of fatigue and stress. Be an active listener and an avid encourager helping IWs confront any unhealthy addiction they may have. Visit them as often as possible.

7. For a "burnout" self-test, see MindTools website: http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTCS_08.htm

- Provide opportunities for IWs to get away from their everyday living and ministry environments, to have a personal retreat (like Christ did) and/or spend time with their family and friends. Refer them to more experienced IWs or health professionals to receive essential care and support when necessary.

Financial Shortage

The living standard in certain regions inside the 10/40 Window can be quite high. Urban areas are more expensive to live in compared to rural living. Vocational IWs from the A4 regions, in general, do not have strong financial support from their sending churches or mission agencies. Most IWs serving in the frontier environment are tentmakers. They must work very hard to earn their living and maintain their work visas. IW couples who have children face additional financial burdens. Both husband and wife may have to work full-time to provide adequate financial resources for their extended families and their children. Therefore, many tentmaking IWs face financial shortages if one or both breadwinners lose their jobs.

IWs serving in the 10/40 Window must raise adequate financial support through creative means. First and foremost, they are encouraged to depend on and seek guidance from God when they face financial difficulties. Hudson Taylor encourages, “Depend on it. God’s work done in God’s way will never lack God’s supply.⁸” IWs should learn how to raise funds effectively, use their financial resources wisely, and live a simple lifestyle. Before going out to the field, vocational IWs should raise enough funds, usually at least eighty percent of the total yearly budget. Mission leaders should guide IWs on raising funds, advocating for them, and encouraging their sending churches to pray for and send financial resources to the field/mission agencies on a timely basis.

New IWs should actively connect with established churches/fellowships in the field, seek internship or partnership opportunities, and request financial support to supplement their ministry expenses. Encourage IWs to develop accountability in life, ministry, and finances with prayer partners and supporters. IWs should maintain a lifestyle of integrity and return all money they may have borrowed from other IWs during crisis situations. Finally, encourage tentmaking IWs and Business-As-Mission operators to partner with each other and provide employment advice and opportunities while sharing their experiences and resources.

8. <https://gracequotes.org/quote/depend-on-it-gods-work-done-in-gods-way-will-never-lack-gods-supply/>

Lack of Support and Training

IWs from A4 regions serving in the 10/40 Window do not have the same training and/or on-field support as those of vocational IWs sent out by established Western mission agencies. While IWs expect their sending churches or mission agencies to pray and provide on-field support for them, emerging mission agencies from the A4 regions often lack experienced field staff to care for their workers. As a result, many IWs seek development and training opportunities to improve their biblical knowledge and ministry skills. Young IWs also desire to be mentored by spiritually mature IWs.

All IWs need to rely solely on God for the ultimate support, knowledge, and wisdom to address their challenges. As a practical approach, IWs should be encouraged to adopt a lifelong learning attitude and develop a Personal Development Plan (PDP). A PDP should include setting realistic goals and actionable items to improve their physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being, as well as their knowledge of God and ministry competence. IWs should evaluate, review, and adjust the PDP at least once a year.

Team leaders should periodically visit their IWs to provide pastoral care and offer appropriate ministry training. International workers in the field should connect with leaders of mission agencies, regional networks, and local churches to develop a good relationship with them and receive support and training through them. Mature IWs should provide internship opportunities, on-the-job ministry training, and theological education to less mature IWs.

Children's Education

Children are a heritage and a special reward from God (Psalm 127:3). They are natural bridge-builders, allowing families and neighbours to connect regardless of their social backgrounds or religious beliefs. They are valuable mission team members in God's Kingdom and bring much joy to IW families. Nevertheless, IW couples and their children encounter additional hurdles, including financial burdens, parental issues, children's education, undue expectations from grandparents, etc.

We recommend the following strategies to address the challenges relating to children's education:

- Advise IW couples to keep their children in the field whenever possible so they will live, grow, and serve the Lord as a family unit.
- Encourage IWs to train up their children in three main areas: teaching and living out the Scripture at home, worshipping God and experiencing

His love at church, and acquiring knowledge and social skills at school. In addition, IWS may help their children to learn their mother tongue and the culture of their home country.

- Mission leaders should help IWS to evaluate the pros and cons of different school options for their children, including financial and human costs. These options may include homeschool (least costly, but parents will be the headteachers), local school (children will be immersed in the host culture and local religions), Christian school (set up by Protestants or the Catholic church), English international school (more expensive and children are exposed to liberalism and materialism, including the prosperity gospel), or boarding school in their home countries or elsewhere, etc.
- Encourage churches or fellowships in the field to give financially to cover part of IWS' children's educational expenses.
- IWS are counselled to arrange the best educational option, being both affordable and appropriate for the developmental stage of their children. Some IWS may send their children to their home country to receive their high school and/or university education. Leaders should help IWS understand the characteristics of and unique challenges of raising TCKs. They should also pray and help IWS care for their children who are not living in the field.

Role Changes and Calling

The 10/40 Window is a spiritually dark and challenging place to serve. New IWS coming to the field will undergo considerable culture shock and significant role changes in a new living and ministry environment. Many may feel they are not up to fulfilling this calling on their lives and question if God really did call them to serve in hard places. IWS who had successful ministries in their home countries will have a more difficult transition period. They are regarded as an unknown IW struggling to survive in an unfamiliar environment rather than a well-respected Christian worker in their home church network. Only those who have clear and strong calls from God can endure these difficult transitions. New IWS often go through momentous psychological changes and frank spiritual reflections as they discern their true identities in Christ and new ministry roles in the Kingdom of God.

One of the most important goals of field support is to walk alongside IWS and help them to affirm their divine calling to serve in the mission field, discern their precious identity in Christ, see God as their ultimate supporter, and confirm their unique role in the Kingdom of God. Mission leaders should assist IWS in seeking

God's guidance and explore the most strategic and suitable ministry God has prepared for them. Counsel IWs and their sending churches to partner with like-minded IWs and serve in strategic ministries for the long haul, so they will see the unreached peoples come to Christ. Help IWs to redefine success as Christ-likeness, faithfulness, and gratitude to God.

Conflict and Disunity

Many IWs experience the pain of facing conflicts or disunity with their mission agencies or other IWs in the field. IWs often tend to have tough personalities and steel-like determination, which helps them survive in challenging environments. Therefore, new and immature IWs often experience challenges in building good interpersonal relationships with others and are more likely to cause disputes, mistrust, gossip, divisions, and cliques in the field. Conflict and disunity among IWs reflect negatively on the Gospel they preach and portray an awful testimony of the Lord they serve.

We recommend the following strategies to minimize potential conflicts and disunity in the field:

- Challenge IWs to live a Christ-centred life filled with His acceptance, forgiveness, grace, humility, and love. Encourage IWs to prioritize praying and playing with their team members and their families as the best preventative measure to avoid conflict and disunity in the mission team.
- Encourage IWs and their team members to develop a team covenant that will strengthen their commitments to love one another and spell out clearly how to handle future conflicts and disagreements in biblical ways.
- Help IWs to be careful with their tongues, especially when they are in conflict situations. The Scripture teaches, “By patience *and* a calm spirit a ruler may be persuaded, And a soft *and* gentle tongue breaks the bone [of resistance]” (Proverbs 25:15 AMP⁹). Encourage IWs to actively take “time outs” and seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit regarding how, what, and when they should respond.
- Encourage IWs to resolve their personal conflicts and assist them to be transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit and to serve as agents of transformation.
- Help IWs to put on the whole armour of God to stand against the Enemy's schemes and to know, “our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against

9. *Amplified Bible* (AMP). Copyright © 2015 by [The Lockman Foundation](#), La Habra, CA 90631. All rights reserved.

the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.” (Ephesians 6:11-13).

Closing Remarks

This chapter presents ten common challenges international workers may face in the mission field. It also recommends caring strategies to overcome potential difficulties and to increase the IWs’ resiliency as they live out the missionary call. These proposed caring strategies are based on the Seven Guiding Principles shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2
Seven Guiding Principles (Wan and Lau 2019)

Guiding Principles	Specific	Relational Elements	Dimension
1. Depending on the Triune God to fulfill the mission of God	<i>The Trinity</i>	<i>Being</i>	<i>Vertical</i>
2. Living a Christ-centred life for the Kingdom of God			
3. Seeking the Holy Spirit for transformation and guidance			
4. Affirming scriptural authority and continual learning	<i>The Scripture</i>	<i>Knowing</i>	<i>Vertical and horizontal</i>
5. Modelling life and ministry	<i>Personal (individual)</i>	<i>Doing</i>	
6. Adopting a relational approach for field support ministries	<i>Collective (institutional)</i>		
7. Partnering with Kingdom communities for the glory of God			

O’Donnell rightly warns, “Without adequate member care strategies, there is little hope for the ongoing maintenance of the frontier missionary movement” (O’Donnell 1992). We believe the retention rate of IWs serving in the field can be significantly improved if they and their mission leaders follow the recommended caring strategies provided in this chapter.

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For Further Reading



Chinese Diaspora Kingdom Workers: In Action with Guidance
by Enoch Wan and Jacky Lau

God is using diaspora for His mission purposes: the evangelization of the diaspora people and the mobilization of diaspora believers to actively participate in global missions. This book introduces seven guiding principles for field support ministries for diaspora Kingdom workers.

Chapter 12

Preparing for Conflict in Community

by Paula Jones

Along the journey called life, there are a plethora of challenges and opportunities that come our way. Whether presenting to us in forms of intrigue, demand, necessity, or the ordinary, we can experience challenge and opportunity every day through various conduits.

Perhaps the most meaningful conduit is relationship. When journeyed long enough, deep enough, or even briefly, relationships in all forms provide us with potential opportunities to be embraced or lost. Chances to face these relationships as conduits of Christ's love are occasions to be one with His Spirit and part of His plan of reconciliation. Each of us faces countless opportunities every week at home and in our communities. If we listen to ourselves, to the Spirit, and to others, follow through with faith and love while trusting in the redemptive work of Christ, we will be agents of reconciliation. If there is a need for reconciliation, then clearly, there is conflict!

“All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:18-21).

There are many books and tools to study and use for conflict management, but this book and consequently this chapter is one of preparation. Preparation is looking ahead and making ready. As ways to grow and prepare for conflict, we will consider four primary learning areas and three attitudes or postures, followed by a brief look at ways to engage when we encounter it. The learning areas are 1) self-knowledge, 2) knowledge of self through Christ, 3) knowledge of self in relation to others, and 4) self with others as the body – a community under Christ as Head.

The attitudes required for gracious, productive conflict, which produces good fruit in us, others, and the community, include humility, faith, and love. I have not forgotten forgiveness. Forgiveness will be the practice of one who applies humility with Christ and others, lives in faith in Christ's work in self and others, and has heartfelt love for Christ and others. Forgiveness is essential in relationships and flows out of a heart acknowledging and resting in the redeeming love of Christ. One who has a deep understanding of their own desperate need and experience of the forgiveness of Christ will have the generosity of heart to forgive others.

Conflict is not a beloved word and is often an avoided circumstance, yet it is as old as Adam and Eve. It is old as dirt, so to speak. Although God created the earth and mankind, and it was good, conflict entered the world in those early days—Eve and the serpent, Adam and Eve, Adam and Eve in conflict with their Creator, and conflict in some sense with creation because of their sin.

Don't get me wrong, not all conflict is sin; however, it can certainly be a catapult to sin if we allow the conflicts to be platforms of idolatry in our lives. Had Eve's response to the serpent been different, she might have faced conflict with humility and acceptance of her place and limitations in the garden, trusting the loving boundaries her Creator gave her. If Adam had loved God more than Eve, would he have faced the conflicting decision of his heart with faith, obedience, contentment, and gentle confrontation of his wife? Had they faced the situation with the knowledge of God and submission to Christ through the power of the Spirit, conflict would not necessarily have been avoided but quieted and resolved.

We all know this story of conflict was full-blown, and all of us have been sinning ever since. We needed Christ to face the ultimate conflict for us. God had His plans from the beginning to rescue us from sin and the darkness of our hearts brought on by the devil, the flesh, and the world. Christ Himself became sin for us and fought for us. He continues to fight for us. If Christ is for us, who can be against us?

So, we who are in Christ have a responsibility to Him and to one another, but also to the world. Genesis 1:27 says all of mankind was created in the image of God.

Although I have identified four learning areas and three postures for preparing for loving productive conflict engagement, it is impossible to entirely separate these areas and attitudes even in my writing. They are intertwined and woven together just as we are woven by our Creator for community. Now, let us look at the extent, responsibility, and privilege of being image-bearers of God and co-heirs with Christ.

Self-Knowledge

In some sense, we may know ourselves quite well, yet we are all on a journey of understanding why we do what we do, how we impact others by what we do, and why and how others affect us. We are complex beings with deep longings only God can fill. Our thinking gets twisted as the person we think we are, or perhaps who we want to be, is not nearly always the person others see.

Everyone has internal conflict; we are conflicted in our own hearts at times. Praise God we have been rescued from sin and set free by the Spirit who is at work within us. One who has good self-knowledge is aware of their weaknesses and strengths, remembers their failures, sins, and faults, and the growth, development, and progress. They can notice when emotions are rising and explore what triggers them and what needs to be resolved. They may learn how to manage their feelings and responses to others, not projecting their own history or pain onto the person who may be near their trigger point. They can separate their own experience from the experience of others and listen without assumption or presumption.

A person with healthy self-knowledge can celebrate another person's accomplishment without jealousy or shoulder another's pain or need without reciprocation. The one who has healthy self-knowledge will have the ability to care for self, set boundaries, and regulate their interactions with others because they understand how they impact others. Additionally, good self-knowledge and growth also include the skill of checking in on how one might be impacting another.

The one who has healthy self-knowledge will have the ability to care for self, set boundaries, and regulate their interactions...

If you want to grow in self-knowledge, enter relationships with others with whom you give permission to tell you your strengths and weaknesses. Find someone willing to ask you hard questions and speak the truth to you in love. Take a course such as the *Sharpening Your Interpersonal Skills* workshop. Look into your Birkman Assessment and talk it through with others. Explore and identify your key values. So often, conflicts hit us hard when we feel our values are ignored or threatened. The most effective way to grow in self-knowledge is through the reflection we see of ourselves when we submit our spirits to God's Spirit through the study of His Word. This is where we learn about ourselves through Christ.

Knowledge of Self through Christ

Developing self-knowledge through the light and lens of Christ is the greatest way to grow in the knowledge of God, yourself, and understanding of others. As the Spirit of God reveals Himself to us through His Word, we also see ourselves more clearly. Here again, it is helpful to have trusted spiritual friends who can help us interpret and apply God's Word in our situations and hearts. An accountability partner or a spiritual director can help us with our blind spots, calling us into obedience and reminding us of what only God can do, reminding us of our humanity and God's deity.

“There is no one righteous, no not one. We have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. I am a sinner not worthy of Christ. I am not righteous on my own. I am in deep need of a Saviour” (Romans 3:9-11, 22-23).

It is imperative for us to know and accept we are sinners and we are forgiven by Christ; it is foundational for us to know we are chosen by God, made holy by Christ, and dearly loved by our Heavenly Father. Because we are His and we are profoundly and utterly loved, we have the capacity to exude those beautiful gifts of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Those are precisely the beautiful gifts we have received from Christ. It is what we have been given; receive them, friends, and then give them away (Colossians 3:12)!

These gifts were not cheap. They were generously but not easily given. The gift of sweet, free, joy-filled life without guilt was purchased through great planning, extreme suffering, shed blood, and even Christ being forsaken by His Heavenly Father, whom He had always been with, to die for sinners like us. God's great and painful redemptive work is for everyone. How we relate to everyone in conflict situations is a challenge and an opportunity to trust Him and join in extending the loving gifts He so wonderfully gave to us.

Knowledge of Self in Relation to Others

The love and sacrifice of Christ removed barriers for me and all my brothers and sisters. As a result, we have much in common with one another. All were sinners, and while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

The Scriptures often reference believers as a whole—us, we, our. Many passages refer to the Church, the Body of Christ, believers, or brothers and sisters. The New Testament clearly presents the message of Christ being for us! God's plan for expanding His community involves us as the community. If you want to serve overseas and work alone, please stay home! Of the places I have lived and

visited across many countries in Asia, I can tell you community is of high value in these countries. They are watching to see how we do community among them, but also among ourselves. If you want to impact communities, you need to be a community champion.

Self with Others as the Body: A Community under Christ as Head

One of the problems is we are often more for and about ourselves than Christ or others. *We* get into a difficult situation and want to defend, fight, deny, or avoid the nasty realities or people. *We* compare our strengths against another's weaknesses. *We* forget we are sinners in need of a Saviour. Before *we* were co-heirs, *we* were co-sinners. *We* need the skills of warriors, but not warriors of human armies; *we* need the skills of those who have been trained by Christ and are reliant upon His Spirit. These skills come from knowing the surpassing greatness of Christ in contrast to the limitless smallness of ourselves, yet with the miraculous invitation to be His chosen cleansed children, even His brothers and sisters!

We have been purchased by His costly blood, shed on the cross. *We* are bought, friends. Let it sink in for a bit. If *we* are purchased, *we* were slaves; if *we* are now brothers and sisters, *we* are now co-heirs with Christ, the only Son of the Most High God. Selah. *We* need to pause here and sit in this truth more often than we naturally do. I italicized "we" for a reason I will expound upon later. For now, suffice to say *we* together are the Body of Christ, given His Spirit to work *together* as representatives of Christ who is *our* Head, so the world may see He is God.

We have looked at learning about ourselves, ourselves through Christ, and relating to others. These all intersect because God made us for community with Him and one another. He also created us to be a collective witness to the world. There are many benefits to learning how to live in community with Christ, and one another, in which we can experience the joy and beauty of fellowship, but there are additional purposes at work in this plan of God. He invites us into fellowship with Him and one another and into joining Him in the expanded invitation to others who do not yet know Him. We are most effective in witnessing when we live as one, in community with Christ and one another. None of these truths are new to us, yet we can miss them. My hope and my prayer

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are as you read this chapter and the truths resonate with your spirit, you will be touched by the Holy Spirit and empowered to live these practices out more and more for the glory of God and the part we share in witness to the world.

In the New Testament, 1 Corinthians 12-14 describes how we are the Body of Christ, all essential parts with various necessary functions, and how we need each other. We rejoice as a whole, we suffer as a whole, and we work together as a whole under one Head, who is Christ Jesus. He has given each one of us gifts according to His purposes and shown us the way in which to work. “And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love” (1 Corinthians 13:13).

It is worth your time to study the New Testament on the “one another” passages. It is significant how Christ prayed for us to be one.

“...that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me” (John 17:21-23).

Attitudes/Postures: Humility, Faith, and Love

The attitudes and postures of our hearts are where good character can be developed, seen, and helpful in communities working through conflict. Humility is embodied by Christ Himself. As we read through the gospels, the epistles, and even the prophets who foretold His coming, humility is clearly seen in who Christ is and how He walked on earth. Christ is our Head and our example.

A contemplative study of Philippians 2 is an excellent place to understand how to live in humility. Ephesians 5:21 tells us to “Submit to one another out of reverence to Christ.” James implores us to humble ourselves. Micah instructs us to walk humbly.

We each have a responsibility to God for our own actions, and we are invited into carrying one another’s burdens. Galatians 6 gives us careful instruction in how to do this. It involves personal responsibility, humility, faith, and love. Everything we do grows out of our faith in believing who God is, who He says we are, and what we believe He can accomplish in and through us by moving in love and humility (Galatians 6:1-6).

“The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love” (Galatians 5:6). If we understand God’s love, what He has done for us, and believe, full of the

fruit of the Spirit, we can express love through faith. Believe God will help us when we pray, listen, and ask for wisdom. He prayed for us to love one another. This is His will! Ask Him for it and believe He will do it.

Love has already been mentioned and must be continually emphasized. If we get nothing else, let us grow in understanding the enormity of God's love for us and be generous in loving others. As Paul said in 1 Corinthians 13, "...the greatest of these is love." Love is the amazing bit that lasts. We can have lasting fruit and an inheritance to pass on, and it only increases with use! Is there any other gift that increases with use? Well, maybe generosity, but actually, love and generosity are very similar. We all know you cannot give what you do not possess. Oh, dear ones, do not miss out on love, on knowing you are loved by God; you are the beloved! Study it, believe it, and agree with others in prayer for this to be your identity in Christ. The book of Ephesians is rich in confirming our identity in Christ (Ephesians 2:4-5).

Once we live into our identity in Christ as His beloved, we can live into His commands to love Him and others (Mark 12:30-31).

Now since we have looked at areas of learning as preparation for conflict and postures to practice in conflict, let's consider a few things which may help when we encounter it.

Seen and Unseen

There are knowns and unknowns. We are all unique in our felt needs, histories, memories, experiences, wounds, and habits. Everyone has belief systems that impact how we interact with God, others, and the world, often unconsciously formed through our experiences and coping mechanisms. If we have learned to process why we do what we do and learned to work through the deep wounds of our souls with Christ, we may be better equipped to acknowledge when we are reacting to others from an unresolved experience. Understanding our shortcomings and capabilities of misunderstanding others enables us to be more open to engaging in conflict in productive ways. Although I said "learned," we need to be continually learning.

There is the "you" you see and know, and there is the "you" others see or do not see and know, do not know, or think they know. The reverse is also true. Our actions and behaviours are seen; our feelings and intentions are unseen. Each of us is responsible for working out the unseen with Christ through the work of His Spirit within us. We may choose to share those inner workings with trusted friends and spiritual mentors. At times, it is also important to share fears

or struggles with a colleague when a pattern or personal history and/or felt need is impacting a relationship.

Common Ground

When facing conflict, it may be helpful to put the issues aside for a time and find common ground. Every person has values. Although values differ among individuals, there are often common threads and shared values. When individuals are invited to share seven to ten values and give examples of what they look like in life, it humanizes the person and shows the heart, needs, and vulnerabilities of a person. After these values are shared, there will be obvious differences among those in conflict. Still, there will also be some areas of common value because we all are created in God's image and desire to love, be loved, accepted, forgiven, and understood. In addition to sharing personal values, we can talk about shared goals and outcomes. What goals are we all working towards, or what outcomes do each of us want?

Communication

Listen, listen, and listen. Listen for the literal words. Listen to understand. Listen, so you might build the other up. What do the actual words communicate? Do not assume but ask by repeating what you hear or asking for clarification. These comments may begin with, "I want to understand you. Is this what you are saying? This is what I hear you saying.... This seems important to you. Will you help me understand?"

The language we use is important and impacting. Consider learning how to communicate with open questions and personal accountability language such as: "When this happened... it was difficult for me... when you said this.... I felt..."

It was difficult for me when.... because I felt...."

Making judgments is something we do without thinking. Some of those judgments help us survive, such as judging the speed and distance of a passing vehicle. Other judgments are not helpful or healthy. Consider noticing times when you judge or draw conclusions based on appearance or a few spoken words. Then, practice suspending those judgments and work at learning about the person or circumstance.

What is Your Usual Conflict Style?

The conflict styles¹ are accommodating, avoiding, compromising, collaborating, or competing.

It is valuable to understand your preferred conflict style while recognizing others may have different preferred styles. It is also helpful to recognize how the specific styles may be most beneficial in a corresponding situation. Depending on the relationship and dynamics of the conflict, particular styles can have better outcomes.

If a conflict arose where a violent person was running into my apartment, I would likely choose to *avoid* confrontation. However, if the building were on fire, and we had a family separated in rooms, I would value the conflict style of *competing* or commanding instruction of a professional to lead the rescue. When there are long-term relationships in conflict, shared values and goals with time for focus, a collaborating approach can produce effective, sustainable direction. In the situation of one person having much to lose in an area of high need, I might accommodate for their situation, denying my own comforts. This may seem like the choice of weakness, and sometimes it is, but sometimes it is the best choice.

Did Christ not accommodate for us in our plight of sin? We had no way to save ourselves. In confronting the devil, death, and sin, His style was *competing*; He took charge and was victorious. He was collaborating with the Father and the Spirit. God the Father sent His Son as a sacrifice for us; Christ listened to His Father and did only what the Father instructed Him to do. When He experienced temptation in the desert, He combatted conflict with the Word of God, and the Spirit attended Him. In the Garden of Gethsemane, when He was personally conflicted in anticipation of His death, He submitted to the Father out of obedience, though the inner conflict was painful. At times He avoided the argumentative crowds who wanted to destroy Him.

Mediation

Christ is the perfect Mediator. He has reconciled us to God and has given us the ministry of reconciliation. As we enter the ministry of reconciliation, whether for bringing a seeker into the knowledge of Christ's invitation for eternal life or working through complex issues with fellow believers, let us allow Christ through His Spirit to lead us.

1. See <https://kilmanniagnostics.com/assessments/thomas-kilmann-instrument-one-assessment-person/#:~:text=LEARN%20ALL%20ABOUT%20YOUR%20CONFLICT,compromising%2C%20avoiding%2C%20and%20accommodating>.

Listening to individuals separately can be a very important first step as a mediator. The individual needs to be heard, understood, and acknowledged for their value as a person who is given the opportunity to present their experience. A mediator can also help them unpack and process their experience in the conflict by looking at the seen and unseen workings of the conflict. As the seen and unseen workings are unpacked, it can give perspective on themselves and the other party in the conflict.

With intentions, meaning well is not always enough. Do we always even know what our intentions are? Did we even consider intentions at all? When one of our sons was just five years old, he often said, “but I didn’t mean to do it.” These occasions became learning opportunities for him to develop how to “mean to do something else.” We need to learn to be intentional in relationships. All too often, we can slip into autopilot and be quite unintentional, leading to disaster in crisis situations. As God’s people, chosen, holy, and dearly loved, we are called to be intentionally loving people to Christ and to the world. I believe as we grow in knowing Christ and inviting Him to work in us and intentionally live by humility, faith, and love, the challenges of conflict we face will be opportunities for the conduits of Christ’s loving invitation into the community of the Trinity and the Church.

Resources

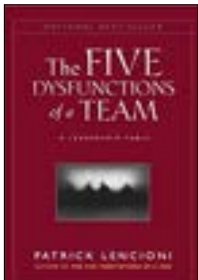
Grip-Birkman Assessment: <https://www.gripbirkman.com/>

Sharpening Your Interpersonal Skills: <http://itpartners.org/page6/page0/>

Mind Tools: <https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/listening-quiz.htm>

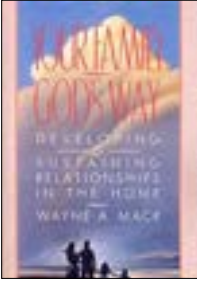
Synergy Commons: <https://synergycommons.net/resources/tool-circle-of-conflict/>
<https://www.tablegroup.com/topics-and-resources/teamwork-5-dysfunctions/>

Further Reading



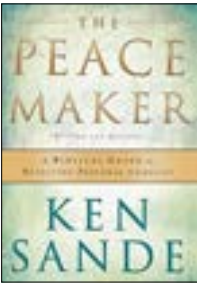
The Five Dysfunctions of a Team by Patrick Lencioni.

A leadership fable that is enthralling and instructive. Throughout the story, Lencioni reveals the five dysfunctions which go to the very heart of why teams—even the best ones—often struggle. He outlines a powerful model and actionable steps that can be used to overcome these common hurdles and build a cohesive, effective team.



Your Family God's Way: Developing and Sustaining Relationships in the Home by Wayne Mack.

Offers biblical insight and practical wisdom into two areas of family life—communication and conflict resolution. Examines why families fight and explains the key to turning family discord into harmony.



The Peacemaker by Ken Sande.

The author presents a comprehensive and practical theology for conflict resolution designed to bring about not only a cease-fire but also unity and harmony. He takes readers beyond resolving conflicts to true, life-changing reconciliation with family members, co-workers, and fellow believers. Biblically based, *The Peacemaker* is full of godly wisdom and useful suggestions that are easily applied to any relationship needing reconciliation.

Chapter 13

Seven Factors Contributing to Ministry After Trauma

by Ronald Brown

The global context is changing. Many countries are now being called high-security alert nations. At any given time, several countries are involved in ethnic wars, on the brink of a coup d'état, or in a turmoil of one kind or another. Inevitably, when populations are at war, people risk being suddenly displaced through political evacuations.

Working in these kinds of settings are people associated with non-governmental organizations, relief and development agencies, and missionary organizations. The uncomfortable fact is that they will most likely experience personal trauma during their time overseas. For those bringing the good news of Jesus Christ, the troubled settings in which they minister are the new frontier for the Gospel. Nations in crisis need a message of hope now more than ever.

Nations in crisis need
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Recently, a project¹ was conducted to discover factors contributing to the resiliency and retention of international workers (IWs) who have gone through traumatic events in their missionary career in Africa and yet continue to serve there. In this case study, some key factors were identified and analyzed which seem to contribute to resiliency in Western missionaries in Africa. These factors were also emphasized in the *Best Practices* of their mission agencies.

Factors that Contributed to Missionary Retention Despite Trauma

In the project, international workers who had experienced various types of trauma were interviewed. These IWs had been able to continue in their missionary calling after their particular trauma. Two questions were considered:

1. Ronald Brown, 2005. *Self-identified retention factors by Western missionaries in Africa who have experienced traumatic events*. DMin project. Trinity International University.

- What pre-trauma factors contribute to the retention of these workers?
- What post-trauma factors contribute to the retention of these workers?

IWs brought four factors into their trauma event: a strong personal *call* to be where they were, a preparedness from birth, words from God, and sturdy relationships.

Four factors that emerged after the trauma were: experiencing the keeper side of God, hearing authoritative leadership voices, quickly finding new ministry foci, and benefiting from functional networks.

Three unexpected results from the trauma event were a less encumbered way of living, embracing sudden transitions as doors to new ministries, and a reshaped life for future ministry.

Seven Things Mission Agencies Can Do for Their Missionaries

Further research suggested several things that mission leaders can do to enhance resiliency and longevity in IWs who have gone through traumatic events. In the study, thirty workers who did not quit despite having experienced traumas—such as political evacuations, rape, car-jackings, armed home invasions and robberies—were asked about factors contributing to their resiliency and longevity on the frontlines.

Here are seven things the mission agencies did that their international workers found helpful:

1. Created Networks of Relationships

The good relationships that resilient IWs enjoyed with other IWs were most often cited as a retention factor. Their missionary-sending agencies had ensured that missionaries worked on teams and provided training and coaching to nurture good team relationships. This *Best Practice* earned “post-trauma pay-off” when fellow team members helped provide a “soft landing” for each other.

Another useful network that agencies had established was the regional network. This was used when workers evacuated to surrounding countries to find temporary shelter and safety. Agencies that plan regional gatherings will inadvertently develop and expand a wider network of relationships for their international workers. This more extensive network will sometimes pay dividends in missionary resiliency later.

2. Acknowledged the Trauma

If the mission leadership does not acknowledge in some way the trauma that a

worker has endured, then an “elephant” enters the room. The trauma suffered by a worker can have an enormous personal effect. Yet, the description of this same event might make a relatively minimal emotional impact on mission leadership as the e-mail describing the trauma is quickly scanned. Therefore, the onus is on the leader to acknowledge the event and to actively find out how the worker is coping after a trauma.

After a very traumatic event, one IW family was back in their homeland for a short time. They spoke in glowing terms of their mission leader and his wife, who came to visit them. “It was more than an e-mail message. He came with his wife.” That action spoke volumes, and they felt that the pain they had endured had been validated by the visit of a key leader. This contrasted with another family who did not hear anything from their leadership after a very tense, traumatic robbery. “It was as if they (leaders) didn’t care.” The family felt very much on their own, and they felt hurt by the lack of leadership response.

3. Stayed in the Region

Mission teams with evacuation protocols that include a first level of evacuation to another country in the region (as opposed to a direct return to the homeland) seem to fare better after a traumatic event. According to the project data, what gives the evacuee the most benefits in survival and resiliency is the loving support of existing relationships.

Personal relationships are often stronger on the field than in the homeland. The level of empathy on the field is frequently greater because it is easier to find people who have gone through similar traumas.

4. Spoke Words of Wisdom in Love

At crucial junctures in an IW’s life, the carefully chosen words of a leader are most welcome. One worker had faithfully ministered for twenty years in a particular country. Following an evacuation, however, she received an invitation to join a ministry team in another country. Despite that attractive opportunity, she felt committed to her original task. When her mission leader visited her, he said, “You have permission to leave. I think you should accept that invitation from another country.” Only then was the IW’s burden lifted, and she could change assignments without feeling guilty about abandoning her post and the project.

It is evident from the project data that IWs are firmly committed. They are not easily dislodged. In fact, these international workers will often regard leaving or moving as a failure or betrayal of a heavenly mandate. What can override this false notion is a well-spoken timely word by a mission leader who has earned an

adequate trust level. A leader like this has clearly listened and understood the situation and therefore can, as it were, speak for God.

5. Developed a Theology of Risk and Suffering

According to the results of ReMAP II², mission agencies with high resiliency practice good screening procedures of mission candidates. One component of good screening should be the requirement that candidates develop their own position on risk and suffering.

In the past, agencies would require candidates to prepare a doctrinal statement, but this document did not usually include a position on suffering. Now, as more and more candidates are placed in high-security alert nations, it can be safely assumed that they will inevitably face trauma. They will be robbed, get sick, and be traumatized. Hence, candidates should be required to consider these risks and develop their own theology of suffering.

Developing a theology of risk and suffering before going overseas will put suffering into its proper context and thus foster resiliency in IWs. This is crucial for those growing up with a Western cultural view of suffering that says something is wrong if we suffer, so we should avoid suffering at all costs. For example, a young mother came to the field with a typical Western cultural view of suffering. She thought that God would protect her family if she did the right things, and they would not suffer.

Seventy-four percent of those interviewed mentioned that they had advanced in developing a biblical view of suffering. One quoted John 16:33, "In this world you will have trouble." Another remembered that Jesus was a man of sorrows acquainted with grief, and so we should expect to suffer as we walk in His footsteps.

One mission leader believes that when agencies target groups of unreached people, they should expect to suffer. Consequently, they need to be better prepared by putting on the appropriate armour and building a sufficient prayer base.

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2. ReMAP II was an international study on missionary retention done by the World Evangelical Alliance, 2003

6. Fostered a Sense of Duty

One surprising discovery in the study was to note how many international workers referred to their farm upbringing where they learned values such as hard work, finishing a task, duty, perseverance and sticking with the project. A Vietnam veteran had also learned these core values. He brought into his missionary career the notion that one stayed at his post until the orders were changed. Quite a few workers who had suffered trauma shared this sense of determination not to run away when trouble came. They were more determined to survive the trauma, push on, and get the task done. Mission executives need to consider how to identify and nurture a sense of duty in their mission candidates.

7. Affirmed the Call

Sending agencies must continue to grapple with how the concept of “the call” is expressed today. For example, do missionary candidates apply out of a desire to do something good in the world? Or because of a set of felt needs? Or from a sense of injustice? If so, how do those sentiments translate or morph into a firm conviction that holds strong during troubles and trials? How is that call developed? Where do new recruits have an opportunity to develop their sense of call?

Maybe the deeper question is how God speaks and calls people today to follow Him in mission work. Whatever the language or semantics used, sending agencies who assign people to high-security alert nations must feel satisfied and confident through the screening process that new recruits are called to serve in such places. Ensuring a firm call at the beginning and testing that call in ministry will definitely contribute to resiliency after trauma.

Further Reading

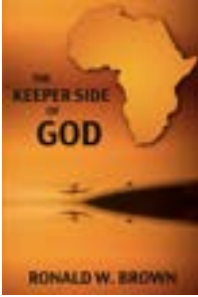
Worth Keeping: Global Perspectives on Best Practice in Missionary Retention edited by Rob Hay, Valerie Lim, Detlef Blocher. http://www.worldevangelicals.org/resources/rfiles/res3_152_link_1292428260.pdf



Healthy, Resilient, & Effective in Cross-Cultural Ministry by Laura Mae Gardner.

This book has been designed to help leaders of sending agencies and churches in creating a comprehensive care plan for their members in mission. The first nine chapters give a comprehensive overview about the why and how-to of setting up a member care plan for cross-cultural workers. The following

chapters discuss in depth the challenges cross-cultural workers are dealing with and what member carers (church, friends, agency) can do to assist them and even more importantly how to avoid unnecessary crises and suffering on the part of these choice people of God.



The Keeper Side of God by Ronald W. Brown.

The purpose of this research project was to investigate missionary-identified factors that contribute to the resiliency and retention of missionaries who have gone through traumatic events in their missionary career in Africa and yet continue to work there. This study identifies and analyzes factors of retention in Western missionaries in Africa who have experienced evacuation trauma yet have been able to continue in their missionary calling.

Chapter 14

Bringing Our Wounds to the Cross

by Marion Dicke

This chapter has been adapted from *Crisis Response Training* (Section 2.3)

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The human spirit can endure in sickness,
but a crushed spirit who can bear? (Proverbs 18:14)

A cheerful heart is good medicine,
but a crushed spirit dries up the bones. (Proverbs 17:22)

Following a traumatic incident, it is not unusual for past wounds that have not been fully healed to be brought to the surface. These wounds can be many and varied such as identity issues, feelings of rejection, pain from previous abuse or trauma, unresolved grief and loss, deep-rooted fears, resentment and unforgiveness. One way we try to cope with these issues is by blocking out or denying the intensity of the pain. While the surfacing of this pain may seem overwhelming, it is actually an opportunity for God to work in the deep places and wounds of our hearts and to bring us to a place of healing and hope.

Following is a list of steps that will help you move toward that place of healing. It may be good to enlist the help of a friend who can prayerfully support you during the process or who can covenant to pray with you for your ongoing health and wholeness.

Steps Toward Healing (Adapted from Rhiannon Lloyd, 1999)

1. Directly face the pain.

Healing begins by identifying the source of the pain and putting into words the hurt caused by the pain. Scriptures are full of examples of God's children who cried out with gut-wrenching need and honesty in times of despair (David,

Elijah, Job, Jeremiah, Hannah). Jesus Himself did not attempt to deny or cover up His emotions and expressed deep anguish, sorrow and disappointment on several occasions.

Sometimes it is helpful to write down on paper all one is feeling and sensing: memories, emotions, dreams, disappointments and disturbing thoughts, which will not go away.

2. Bring the pain to the cross of Jesus.

Realize that Jesus not only hears and understands our pain and hurts, He carries them for us. Picture yourself taking, one by one, the hurts, emotions and issues that you have identified and either nailing them to the cross or laying them at the foot of the cross.

Remember Jesus willingly and lovingly accepted to carry these for you.

- “He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem. Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.” (Isaiah 53:3-5)
- “Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.” (Hebrews 4:14-16)
- “Record my misery; list my tears on your scroll—are they not in your record?” (Psalms 56:8)
- “The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.” (Psalms 34:18)

3. Allow Jesus to speak words of comfort and healing.

Spend some time in silence listening for His voice and allow Him to speak directly to you and the issues you brought to the cross.

- “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.” (Matthew 11:28-29)
- “The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the LORD’s favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion—to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair...” (Isaiah 61:1-3)
- “‘But I will restore you to health and heal your wounds,’ declares the LORD...” (Jeremiah 30:17)
- “He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul...” (Psalms 23:2-3)

4. **Allow God to reveal destructive strategies.**

As our Heavenly Father reveals ways you have responded to the pain that are not pleasing to Him or that create distance from Him, lay them at His feet. These might include such things as bitterness, resentment, strongholds, false guilt, shame, wrong beliefs, or unforgiveness.

One of the things, which may need to be identified, is what Curtis and Eldredge refer to as the “message of the arrows.” These are

“...words that have been spoken, repeated a thousand times, and they play like a recording in our inner thoughts: ‘stupid,’ ‘incompetent,’ ‘ugly,’ ‘unlovable,’ – the list goes on and on. There are images too, scenes from our lives which speak more loudly than words. . . Deep within the poisons stay, poisoning our self-perceptions, until someone comes along with the power to take them away, free us from all the false selves we use to weather the world’s weather and restore us to our true identity.” (*Sacred Romance*, p. 86)

Neil Anderson talks about the concept of strongholds, which he defines as “negative patterns, which are burned into our minds either through repetition over time or through one-time traumatic experiences.” He goes on to say that “Once a stronghold of thought and response is entrenched in your mind, your

ability to choose and to act contrary to that pattern is virtually nonexistent.” (*Victory over the Darkness*, pp 160, 164)

Strongholds may include such things as inferiority, hostility, manipulation or need to control, sexual bondage, eating disorders, and deep-rooted fears.

- “Yet you desired faithfulness even in the womb; you taught me wisdom in that secret place. Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.” (Psalms 51:6-7)
- “Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” (John 8:32)
- “We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5)
- “See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many” (Hebrews 12:15)

5. By God’s grace, both receive and extend forgiveness.

Nowhere is Christ’s work on the cross more significant than in the area of forgiveness. It is because He took on our sins and the sins of the ones who have offended and wronged us that we have the power and the capacity to forgive. Because Jesus has already paid the price for our sins, we can also freely receive the forgiveness He offers. The act of forgiving is also, however, a deliberate, intentional process. (See Ken Williams’ “Steps to Forgiving” in *Sharpening Your Interpersonal Skills*, or Neil Anderson’s “Twelve Steps to Forgiveness” in *Victory over the Darkness*, pp 203-205).

- “...And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.” (Mark 11:25)
- “Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.” (Colossians 3:13)
- “Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you” (Ephesians 4:32)

6. Continue to allow God to daily renew your mind through the truth of His word and His love.

The healing we have received has to be appropriated as we daily discipline our minds to think and live the truth. While it is true that Satan has been defeated, he will once again try and attack us in areas in which we have been previously vulnerable.

What are specific verses that I need to commit to memory – those that speak to me powerfully of the freedom Jesus has procured for me or the love and acceptance He regards me with?

- “Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind...” (Romans 12:2)
- “Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. (Philippians 4:8)
- “The LORD your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing.” (Zephaniah 3:17)

7. Reach out and bless others.

God calls us to a life of blessing and wholeness. One of the rich benefits and privileges, which comes from finding healing and wholeness at the cross of Christ, is our ability to look beyond ourselves and reach out to others in need. We can do that by praying for and coming alongside others and helping them find the same health and healing we have found. This may even include those who have previously wronged us.

- “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.” (2 Corinthians 1:3-4)
- “Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.” (Galatians 6:1-2).
- “After Job had prayed for his friends, the LORD restored his fortunes and gave him twice as much as he had before.” (Job 42:10).

- “Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.” (James 5:16)

Resources

Anderson, Neil. 2000. “Twelve Steps to Forgiveness” in *Victory over the Darkness*. Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers.

Curtis, Brent and John Eldredge. 1997. *The Sacred Romance: Drawing Closer to the Heart of God*. Thomas Nelson.

Lloyd, Rhiannon. 1999. *Steps Toward Healing*. Printed Notes.

APPENDICES

Toward a Theology of Suffering

Part One: Developing a Personal Theology of Suffering

1. Suffering and the Will/Role of God

Questions to Consider:

- Do both good and evil originate with God?
- Are our trials “hand-picked” by God?
- Has God placed limits on Himself with regards to restraining evil in granting man freewill?
OR
- Are there times when He deliberately walks away from evil?

Two different schools of thought:

- A. Kushner in *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*¹

“God wants the righteous to live peaceful happy lives but sometimes even He can’t bring that about. It is too difficult even for God to keep cruelty and chaos from claiming their innocent victims . . . God has set himself the limit that He will not intervene to take away our freedom, including our freedom to hurt ourselves and others around us.”

- B. Joni Erickson in *When God Weeps: Why our Sufferings Matter to the Almighty*²

“Imagine a God who didn’t deliberately permit the smallest details of your particular sorrows. What if your trials weren’t screened by any divine plan? What if God insisted on a hands-off policy toward the tragedies swimming your way. Think what this would mean. . . . Evil can only raise its head where God deliberately backs away-always for reasons that are specific, wise and good, but often hidden during this present life” (p.83).

1. Kushner, Harold S. 2004. *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*. Anchor Books.

2. Tada, Joni Eareckson and Steve Estes. 2000. *When God Weeps: Why Our Sufferings Matter to the Almighty*. Zondervan.

Scripture References:

- Deuteronomy 28:28, 34, 65-67
- Amos 3:6
- Isaiah 45:7
- 2 Corinthians 12:7
- Job 1
- Lamentations 3:38
- 1 Samuel 2:6-7

2. Suffering and the Normal Christian Life

Question to Consider:

- How inevitable is suffering in the life of the believer?

Scripture References:

- Acts 9:15-16
- Acts 14:22
- Hebrews 11:34-30
- Acts 5:41
- Philippians 1:29, 3:10
- What are some biblical examples of types of suffering seen in the lives of believers?

Scripture References:

- Acts 5:41
- 2 Corinthians 6:1-10
- Romans 8:35
- Hebrews 10:33-34

3. The Purposes and Fruits of Suffering

Question to Consider:

- What are some of the purposes or fruits of suffering?

Scripture References:

- Psalms 107:17
- Romans 8:28-29
- 2 Corinthians 4:17
- Philippians 3:8
- Romans 5:1-5
- 2 Corinthians 1:3-11
- 2 Corinthians 12:7-9
- 2 Thessalonians 1:5

4. Suffering and the Promises of God

Questions to Consider:

- What are we promised?
- What are we not promised?

Scripture References:

- Psalms 68: 8-9, 19
- Psalms 103:13-14
- Romans 8:31-39
- 2 Corinthians 4:7-12, 12:9
- 2 Timothy 4:16-18
- 1 Peter 5:10
- Hebrews 11
- Jude 24

Part Two: Helping Others Who are Suffering

Three Principles to Ponder

1. Consider Jesus' example toward those who were suffering

Jesus identified His mission: "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free (Luke 4:18).

Jesus was constantly surrounded by people who were suffering.

2. Understand our mandate with regard to those who are suffering

Scripture References:

- Romans 12:15 – "...mourn with those who mourn."
- 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 - "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God."

3. Recognize that it is only God who can fully suffer with and understand the sufferer.

Scripture References:

- Isaiah 53:3 – “He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.”
- 2 Corinthians 1:5 - “For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ...”
- Hebrews 2:10, 14-18; 4:15 - Jesus Himself suffered and was “...fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest...”

“If it is human to suffer, then the principal theological question when we are confronted by loss and grief is not “Why do we suffer?” but “Who suffers with us?... The Christian’s capacity to feel the pain of others transcends apathy and alienation. But in the last analysis it is the assurance that God suffers with us that is the rock on which we stand in all the turbulence of grief” (Mitchell, Anderson³, p.169).

“When we cry out to God in our times of suffering, we know that we will be heard by one who truly knows what we have gone through. It is a great comfort for a sufferer to know that the presence of an understanding and compassionate God, who not only invites our very human prayers but also knows what it is like to be in so much pain. God hears. God understands. God suffers with us. The lament is heard by One who has been there” (Simundson⁴, p. 29).

“God does not condemn our moments of despair and unbelief. He himself set the tone by diving into earth and enduring cruel, senseless suffering. Before the final moment, His own Son asked if the cup could pass from Him, and on the cross cried out, “God, why have you forsaken me.” The full range of anger and despair and blackness . . . is present in the Christian message - complete identification with the suffering world” (Yancey⁵, p. 98).

3. Mitchell, Kenneth and Herbert Anderson. 1983. *All Our Losses, All Our Grievs*. Westminster John Knox Press

4. Simundson, Daniel. 1983. *Where is God in our Suffering*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House

5. Philip Yancey. 1990. *Where is God When it Hurts*.

Questions to Consider:

- How did Jesus identify His mission?
- What were some of the ways in which Jesus responded to suffering?
- What does it mean to “comfort” people with the comfort we have received?
- How did Jesus express His own deep suffering?
- How comfortable am I with allowing others to express intense emotions such as anger, sorrow or despair?
- How do we help people gradually shift their focus away from trying to find answers to focusing on the resources and compassion of God?
- How do we help people recognize and utilize all the resources available to them?

Adapted from MMCT: Member Care while Managing Crises

Tips for the Big Launch: Preparing TCKs for Adulthood

Condensed Version

Have a suggestion not included here? E-mail additional advice to Beth.Cook@hostmailbox.ca.

Please note items highlighted in **YELLOW** have more information in the handbook or insurance information. **BLUE** highlights indicate resources available on Sharepoint (login required).

Before Age 12

Heart

- Use an **Emoji chart** to talk about emotions on a daily basis.
- Pay attention to times of transition and take note of the unique ways your child goes through them.
- If over the age of eight, consider the **Resilience Donut** during your next home assignment. This tool helps kids lean into natural areas of strength and resilience to help them transition between settings and cultures. Contact Member Care for more information.
- See Healthy Sexuality resource list for resources to start the discussion in the younger years. Check out this helpful [video](#).

Soul

- Preparing to **Practice Examen as a Family**.

Strength

- Make sure you have the **long-form Birth Certificate** with you when you travel.
- Consider investing some of the baby bonus in an **RESP** or **TSFA**. If you need to be connected with a financial planner, consider contacting your district office for a reputable person.
- Consider starting a **bank account** for your child sometime when you are on home assignment. Talk about savings and introduce them to the term “Interest.”
- **Life Insurance** for children is fairly inexpensive and can be rolled over to them in adulthood. Think of it as an investment.

Neighbour

- Have discussions around **bullying and differences**. Explore the Bible to see how to treat others, stand up for injustice, and take our pain to Him to process it.

First Steps: Age 12

Heart

- If you haven't already, consider what **sex education** will look like in your context, considering the emotional maturity of your child, unique issues in your area of service, and Canadian-based education. Find another family or two for peer-to-peer discussion.
- Before next home assignment, discuss LGBTQ issues so your child is not confused or isolated when re-entering the Canadian school system.

Soul

- Peers are an important part of development at this age. Consider whether your child has access to a **youth group** or if you can gather a group of like-minded kids to discuss topics around faith.
- **Godly teachers, pastors, coaches, teammates, and older TCKs** can be great influences.
- Make sure your kids know what you are trusting God with, what your own faith journey has looked like. This is the time when they are ready for the reality of your ups and downs—pedestal parents won't do them much good in the long-term.
- Consider walking them through a *Spiritual Gifts Assessment*, or a [Spiritual Pathways Assessment](#), which helps them pay attention to how they connect with God.

Mind

- Look at what is available in your area for **high school**. Consider if a transcript accepted by Canadian universities/colleges is available from that school. If not, consider online school or boarding options for high school in your area.
- Explore career options. If your student is in local school, or home school, you may need to pursue this. Career paths help dictate course choices in high school, especially grades 11 and 12, so it is good to be prepared.
- **“Rules without relationship fosters rebellion or rigidity.”** Explain the heart behind the rules you make for them and discuss the reasons.

Strength

- **Make sure immunizations are up to date.**
- Begin teaching them to read the labels on the packaging for medications they take. Introduce them to which medicines help with different problems and how to manage issues in non-medicinal ways as well.
- If your child has a **chronic illness**, self-care will be very important. Talk with your medical provider about how to help your child take growing ownership of their own care.

Neighbour

- Start thinking about making sure your child is aware of some **Canadian culture** pieces—peer pressure, bullying, diversity, alcohol use/abuse, cannabis use/abuse, tobacco use/abuse, premarital sex and abstinence, LGBTQ, pornography.
- Helpful websites:
 - <https://cpyu.org/>
 - <https://homeword.com/>
 - <https://www.brettullman.com/>

First Steps: Ages 13-14

Heart

- **Vulnerability fosters vulnerability.** If you want your kids to feel safe to share not only their dreams with you, but also their struggles, consider how you can begin to share your own life story with them. Talk about times when you were sad, lonely, angry, or hurt. Remind them that emotions make terrible masters but great servants when we learn to take them to Jesus.
- Consider **numbing behaviours**. Usually it is in the early teens that accumulated, and maybe ignored grief begins to take a toll on kids. When a child (or adult) turns to numbing techniques to diminish pain, they also unknowingly are numbing joy as well and so may seek unhealthy outlets to help them “feel.”
- Help your child pay attention to possible numbing behaviors (eating, TV binging, gaming, social media) and discuss how they can pay attention to, in healthy ways, what they are otherwise trying to suppress. Sometimes just acknowledging the sadness and validating the grief is enough. Learn to not “fix” the grief, but to create a safe place for it to be examined.

Soul and Mind (continued from Age 12)

Strength

- **Age 14** - As your child's **screen time** increases, discuss healthy balance and what rest looks like—even from technology. Help your child explore other areas that bring delight and help them build a Sabbath rhythm.
- If your child is ready and asking to take on a part-time job, check the section for Age 15 for some suggestions.

Neighbour (continued from Age 12)

Building on Foundations for Bridging Care and Community

During Your Home Assignment: Ages 13-18

Heart

- Build your **RAFT**: Reconciliation Affirmation Farewell Think destination. Tell your kids that you are going to see the organizational counselor. Help them understand this is a **normal practice for self-care**.

Soul

- Prioritize **youth group events** for your children. These will be a part of their re-entry support system in the future, and this is an investment in their **spiritual formation** long term as they build lasting relationships in the church.
- Take full advantage of the provincial education system, especially regarding **learning roadblocks**. Its never to late for assessments if you think your child may have an educational or developmental delay.
- **School guidance counselors** welcome questions and involvement from students and parents alike. Make an appointment to pick their brains about getting prepared.

Strength

- Intentionally discuss use of **provincial insurance** at appointments. Give your child their card and ask them to sign themselves in for appointments.
- Teach them to file **Sutton** claims for things like eye appointments or dentist appointments, if they are over 16.
- Introduce your child to **public transit** in your home province.
- If you haven't already, consider letting your child take charge of their own passport and ticketing during travel. Use trips to talk about when they will be travelling alone.

Neighbour

- Visit a **university fair**. Visit a few campuses and take a tour so your student knows their options.
- If your child is more wired for a **trade**, see if their high school will let them take co-op or its equivalent. Ask in a prayer letter for friends and supporters who work in this field who might be willing to take some time with your child to explore what the day-to-day of the job looks like.

Critical Next Steps: Age 15

Mind

- If your child is in home school or a local school, consider asking your regional developer about building a **career assessment tool** into your education budget.
- If your child is using an American-based curriculum do not assume that it will have the standards to enter Canadian universities.
- Discuss financial strength. Come up with a **basic budget**. Help them explore what a **part-time job** might look like.

Critical Next Steps: Age 16

Mind

- Help your child obtain the equivalent of a **driving** learner's permit if they are interested. Begin discussing driving tips. Begin noting the differences in pedestrian values in Canada versus your adopted culture.
- **Career exploration**, if not already done so.

Mind

- Begin exploring post-high school **education financing**. See what grants are available. Talk about student load debt and come up with a plan to help manage costs.
- Check to see what insurance coverage you have, especially if outside of Canada.

Critical Next Steps: Age 17

Heart

- Review all the **transition** things. **RAFT** for them, **CABIN** for those of your family remaining together without your upcoming graduate. Prepare accordingly to transition well.

- If you haven't already, contact Member Care or your RSC about **ReBoot**.

Soul

- Share what **accountability and mentorship** have meant to you and how God has used these in your own formation. Brainstorm who some of these people might be in his/her life as they transition.

Mind

- Each province is different, but a general rule of thumb is to have **applications** in to your chosen universities by mid-December the year BEFORE entrance.
- Once you have an acceptance to university, you can apply for student loans and scholarships (through the university) and also for provincial grants and loans.
- **Begin planning and dreaming with your child about their return-to-field trip covered by GM. Remember, it needs to be budgeted, so plan ahead!**

Strength

- If you have RESPs, they can help you determine how to best use your money. **Talk to your planner for the best advice.**
- Your student will need your **tax filing** from the year before they enter school in order to apply for financial aid.
- Help your child make a **health cheat sheet**. Include things like personal and family history of illnesses, allergic reactions, when their next vaccinations are due.

Ready! Set! Launch!: Age 18 (or at transition to university/college)

Heart

- Recommended: Re-entry **debrief** with a Counselor (contact Member Care).
- Recommended: **ReBoot**, a re-entry camp geared towards launch into independence for TCKs (ages 16-20). Usually two locations are available, Ontario and Alberta.

Soul

- **Church and Body Life:** It would be ideal if your student were connected with a body that is familiar and a part of our movement. However, that is not always the case. Help your student explore what taking **ownership of their faith and formation** looks like in this next stage, even if it means something that you might not choose for them.
- Talk about **accountability and mentorship** and how they have benefited you.
- Help your child think through their own version of **Greatest**

Commandment Living. What does loving God with heart, soul, mind, and strength, and neighbour as self look like in the next season?

Mind

- Talk to your student about **learning styles**.
- If your student has had **learning challenges** in the past and is going to college or university, encourage them to take advantage of what provisions the school may make on their behalf.
- Even strong students sometimes find the transition to university challenging or demanding. Talking this through ahead of time may help your student not feel blindsided when/if this happens.

Strength

- If going to school in a new province, make sure they meet **provincial guidelines for medical coverage!** Keep your RSC updated about provincial coverage changes.
- Give them a copy of their **immunization record**. Discuss when booster immunizations are due.
- Discuss how to care for important **documents**, hard copy and digital, such as birth certificate, SIN card, provincial health card, driver's license, passport, a list of contact people in case of an emergency, transcripts, diploma, financial aid documentation, tax return from previous year. Check all expiry dates.
- Discuss where their closest **emergency** room is. Identify someone you know who has a medical background (doctor or nurse) who would be willing to answer questions for your child should they be ill.
- Visit the **pharmacy** department. Talk about how to navigate medicines and treatments for different needs.
- See above regarding **RESP** use for additional costs.
- Identify someone who will help them file their **taxes!** Also, let them know what items are tax deductible (work uniforms, health costs) and how to keep track of receipts.
- Set up a bank account. Here's an interesting [article](#) with suggestions.

Neighbour

- Find a **point person** that your ATCK (adult TCK) is comfortable with and will find easy to ask questions of. Talk through tangible needs that you anticipate for your child, such as holidays, finances, voting, car maintenance and registration, emotional needs, job acquisition, university requirements.
- **Campus groups** like Power to Change, and Intervarsity can be great connect points.

- Investigate with your child which churches have vibrant **young adult groups** that might feel like a good fit.

Age 19 and Beyond

Heart

- Each student is provided for one trip back to their away-from-Canada home where their parents are currently serving. Contact your RSC about guidelines to plan this trip.

Strength

- **College Scholarship Grant (CSG):** If your student is receiving the CSG available to full-time students, please ask your child to send their transcript/report card to their RSC at the completion of each semester or term, as required.
- If your student is incurring significant loan debt, consider a Term Life Insurance policy. If something happens to them, you will be responsible for whatever debt is incurred, unfortunately.
- Check your Sutton **Insurance** coverage.

Neighbour

- Check out **Envision Summit**, if your child is interested.

The Global Ministries 5P Values & Competencies Mind Map Quick Start Guide

Welcome to the quick start guide to help you navigate the Mind Map that gives an overview of our GM Competencies. What are the competencies and what is their purpose? The competencies are the outcome of work between the candidate developer, regional developers, vice president, assistant vice president, Member Care, and Envision to help develop a clear development path that



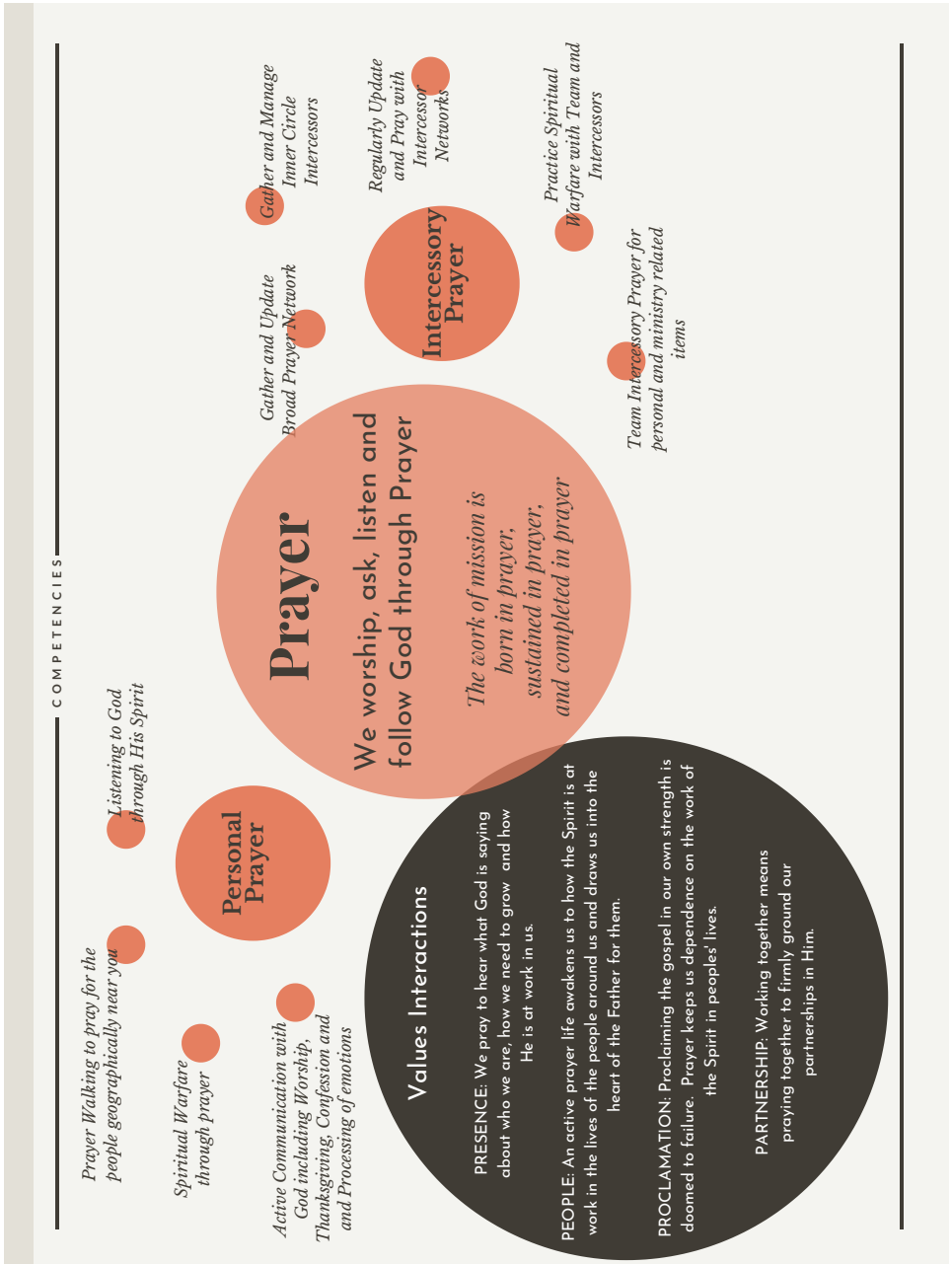
will not only guide candidates as they prepare for their international worker (IW) roles, but also will give direction as IWs seek to develop and grow in fulfilling not only the Great Commission but also the Greatest Commandment.

Our hope is that this list serves as an affirmation of the ways the Lord is already at work in your life, as well as an instrument of the Holy Spirit to guide you into areas of growth that He desires to bring into your life and development. We are all on this journey together!

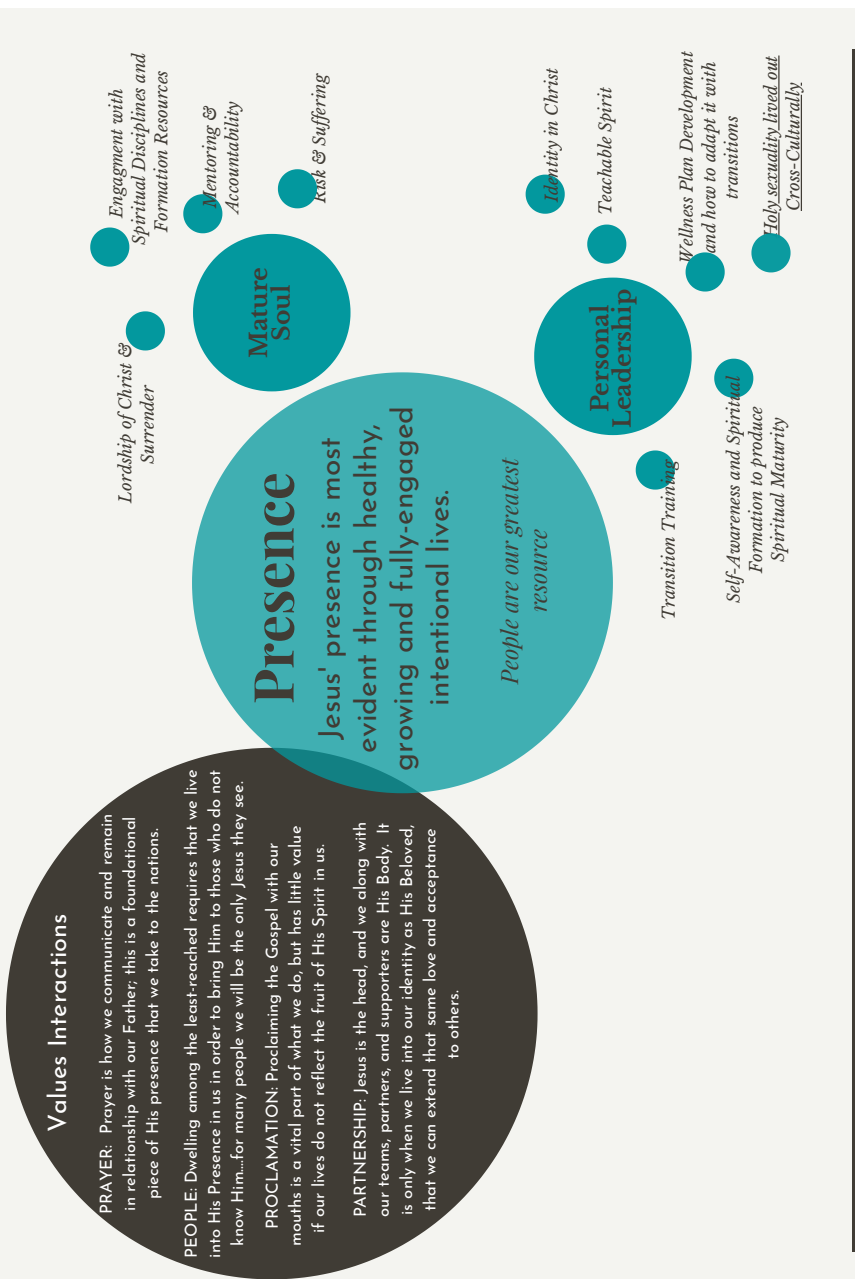
Here's what you need to know:

1. The map is broken down into our **5 P values with their corresponding competencies**
 - Big circles: Five P Values
 - Medium circles: Associated competency
 - Small circles: Topics associated with the competency relevant to IW candidates and IWs
2. Colour differentiations:
 - Each value has its own colour
 - Black circles (on each value page) explains how this value interacts with the others
3. Summary page and Competencies Overview document:
 - This is just a more linear overview of the competencies. For a fuller perspective, please see the Competencies Overview document which outlines the growth trajectory of the competencies.





COMPETENCIES



COMPETENCIES



COMPETENCIES

Nurturing Spiritual Conversations in a new cultural context

Actively being Discipled and Mentored

Living a God-centred life that stands out for its integrity and love for others.

Proclamation
We communicate the gospel with the Holy Spirit power in both life and in word.
We will do anything short of sin to help people know and follow Jesus.

Values Interactions
PRAYER: Dependence on the Spirit to guide our words is accomplished in Prayer. Otherwise we do the proclaiming in our own strength which is in vain.
PRESENCE: Our words and our lives must in coordination proclaim what God is offering to those around us.
PEOPLE: The lostness of man should compel us to bring Him in word and deed to those who are perishing.
PARTNERSHIP: the task is big--overwhelming, even--but when we partner we not only multiply the work, but bring Him more glory through our unity.

Faith Community Engagement
Grow in understanding of expression of the Body in adopted context. Learning Posture.

COMPETENCIES



1. Personal Prayer - Development of active prayer disciplines
2. Intercessory Prayer - Spiritual warfare and the engagement of personal prayer teams
3. Mature Soul - Developing a whole person maturity of heart, mind, and soul
4. Personal Leadership - Activating habits of self-leadership and personal growth
5. Cultural Intelligence - Demonstrating intercultural and least-reached acumen
6. Disciple making - Being engaged in active discipling relationships
7. Faith Community Engagement - Demonstrating ability to build contextual Christian Community
8. Team Participant - Demonstrating capacity to work and/or lead in a team
9. Cooperative Capacity - Engaging the capacity of others outside the organization
10. Active Communication - Involving corporate and individual partners through effective communication

INTERNATIONAL WORKER COMPETENCY RUBRIC - ALLIANCE CHURCHES OF CANADA

GM VALUE	COMPETENCY TITLE	PROFICIENT	DEVELOPING	INADEQUATE
PRAYER	Personal Prayer <i>Active prayer disciplines</i>	Has identifiable practices of communion with God Experiences fresh encounters and growth in various aspects of daily life Actively practices spiritual warfare	Actively developing their prayer patterns/spiritual disciplines Occasional stories of personal encounters with Christ Theologically aware of spiritual warfare with limited engagement	Intermittent practice of prayer and spiritual discipline Unclear integration of Christ into life, words, and practice Unengaged and unaware of the spirit world's power and influence
	Intercessory Prayer <i>Personal and support team engagement</i>	Consistent engagement with an intercessory prayer team Consistently integrates practice with Scripture knowledge	Has a growing number of people with whom they pray Proficient knowledge with limited application to life practices	Limited prayer times/engagements with other people Basic knowledge of Biblical themes with intermittent engagement
PRESENCE	Mature Soul Develops a whole person maturity of heart, mind, and soul	Lives accountable to regular life and spiritual discipline(s) Offers grace and wisdom on the negotiables of faith and practice	"Trying on" disciplines suited to their personal preferences Acknowledges the complexity of faith and practice	Irregular practice of spiritual and life disciplines Elementary understanding of faith and practice
	Personal Leadership <i>Activate habits of self-leadership and personal growth</i>	Faith is integrated into all aspects of life, including vocation Exercises habits promoting healthy work/life rhythms Functions with a high level of emotional intelligence	Exploring specific areas where faith can impact their daily life Identifies needed areas of growth for subsequent lifestyle change Growing ability to process emotions leading to sound decisions.	Growing conviction that faith and practice need to align Demonstrates inconsistency in work/life rhythms Self oriented and oblivious to the 'other'

GM VALUE	COMPETENCY TITLE	PROFICIENT	DEVELOPING	INADEQUATE
PEOPLE	Cultural Intelligence <i>Demonstrates intercultural and least-reached acumen</i>	Implements strategies for cultural integration	Articulates and discusses cultural differences with limited integration	Uncomfortable with other cultures/foods/habits
		People from other cultures are embraced into their social circle	Is developing a network of relationships with people of other cultures	Has few, if any, cross cultural relationships
PROCLAMATION	Disciple making <i>Engaged in active discipling relationships</i>	Can describe the number and nature of their current discipling relationships	Is being actively disciplined and mentored	Unable to articulate who they are discipling, or if they have been personally disciplined
		Spiritual conversations are regular and recent	Have occasional conversations with others about faith	Silent and fearful to communicate their faith
		Are leading others to trust in Jesus	Inconsistent in moving conversations towards trust in Jesus	Cannot articulate or communicate their faith to others
		Actively leads the development of contextual Christian community	Participates in community with occasional leadership responsibility	Attends, but inactive in a Christian community
PARTNERSHIP	Faith Community Engagement <i>Shows ability to build Christian Community</i>	Strengthens team mission through active contributions based on their personal and team strengths	Growing awareness and entering in to their unique role and contribution	Is unaware of the importance of others and their impact on them
		Exercises a healthy conflict resolution strategy	Is aware of conflict resolution strategies	Behaviourally challenging to team and lives with unresolved conflicts
	Team Participant <i>Demonstrated capacity to work and/or lead in a team</i>	Engages the capacity of others outside the organization to achieve shared mission goals	Works cooperatively on limited projects with partners outside of their current ministry	Believes the organization can sufficiently accomplish their goals independently
		Regular reporting of mission-critical information to an identified support base of individuals and churches	Have a circle of people who know and support their ministry	Others don't really know what they are doing
Cooperative Capacity <i>Engages the capacity of others outside the organization</i>	Active Communication <i>Involves corporate and individual partners through effective communication</i>			

Wellness Plan Template

God's Call on My Life:

The Greatest Commandment

“The most important one,” answered Jesus, “is this: ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these” (Mark 12:29-31).

Love the Lord your God

I resolve that my love relationship with God will be the core and foundation for all of life and ministry (encompasses both the receiving and giving of God's love). To that end, over the coming year, I resolve to:

With all your heart

I resolve to express my love for God through emotional wholeness. To that end, over the coming year, I resolve to:

With all your soul

I resolve to express my love for God through spiritual growth. To that end, over the coming year, I resolve to:

With all your mind

I resolve to express my love for God in my thought life and through cognitive and vocational growth. To that end, over the coming year, I resolve to:

□ **ACTION STEP: Revise Personal and Professional Development to help you move toward these goals; discuss with CRD**

And with all your strength

I resolve to express my love for God through the care of my physical resources. To that end, over the coming year, I resolve to:

I resolve to express my love for God through wise stewardship of financial resources. To that end, over the coming year, I resolve to:

□ **ACTION STEP: Review the Mango file, ensuring that contact information is correct and that all reports and test results are up-to-date. Contact mango@ihmcanada.org for questions.**

Love your neighbour as yourself

I resolve to express my love for God through my relationships with others. To that end, over the coming year, I resolve to:

□ **ACTION STEP: Those with elementary and high school children, revise each child’s educational plan and discuss with CRD.**

Date completed or revised: _____

Revised. May 2019
BC

Preparing Your *Wellness Plan*

Personal Inventory

As you work on your *Wellness Plan*, the following questions may help you think of goals or areas of improvement you would like to include in your plan. This inventory is not intended to be exhaustive, just a tool to stir your thinking. Be careful not to include too many goals in one area. Focus on one or two areas under each heading in your *Wellness Plan* and give yourself sufficient time to incorporate them into your life and journey with God before moving on to include more goals. These questions refer to changes you want to make in the coming year, but you may want to review these questions and update your *Wellness Plan* more frequently, perhaps quarterly or monthly.

God's Call on My Life

1. Am I able to articulate God's call on my life?
2. Is this call clear and strong enough to carry me through times of disappointment and discouragement?
3. How has my call been refined over the past ministry assignment?

Love the Lord your God

1. What do I strongly believe about God, His character, His relevance, His care?
2. Is my relationship with God motivated more by love than by fear or guilt?
3. Has the knowledge that I am deeply loved by God become the foundation of my identity, relationships, and ministry?
4. Am I able to rest in God's love?

Love the Lord Your God with All Your Heart

1. **Realistic Self Concept**
 - What has God/the Church/my community affirmed as my strengths, abilities, gifts, and positive attributes in this past year?
 - The things that motivate me for the coming year are . . .
 - What will my response be if those motivational factors are absent?
2. **Self Esteem**
 - To what degree do I truly feel God accepts me, loves me, and

likes me?

- What do I think God does not like about me?

3. Weaknesses

- What were my limitations and weaknesses I acknowledged last year? How have I changed?
- To what degree am I content with weaknesses that I cannot change in myself?

4. Wounds from the Past

- Do I believe more resolution of past wounds is still needed before I can be effective in ministry? What might be the consequences if these are not resolved?
- What steps will I take to address these?

5. Expectations

- What expectations do I have going into this next year? Ministry role? Relationships with colleagues? Personal growth? Ministry effectiveness?
- How am I planning to deal with any unmet expectations/disappointments?
- What ongoing expectations do I have of myself that I am not fulfilling?
- What am I doing to resolve these unmet expectations/these personal disappointments?
- Have my expectations of Global Ministries been fulfilled, or have I been frustrated in this area?
- (If married) What are my expectations of God, my spouse and my children for the next year?

6. Emotions

- Have I been able to identify my positive and negative feelings about myself/my ministry? What are they?
- What have I resolved to do to handle these feelings?

7. Flexibility/Adaptability

- What are my biggest questions about this next year?

- What have I learned about the way I react to uncertainty? How will I seek to live with or resolve the uncertainty?
- Who or what will challenge me the most this next year?

8. Coping with Ambiguity

- How do I feel and act when "the rules" are not clear, or when there is no one "right" answer to a question or problem?
- What situations have I perceived to be ambiguous during this past year?
- How have I responded to that ambiguity?

9. (If married)Trusting God as a Family

- What are we doing now, or are planning to do, to create a trusting attitude that will enable our children to want to serve God along with us?
- Are our children feeling our love and understanding as we make the transition from one phase of ministry to another? In what specific ways are we showing them our love and confidence in a God who does all things well?

10. Gratitude

- How has the past year influenced my attitude of gratitude?
- In what ways can I better express my gratitude to friends and prayer partners?

9. Sexual Purity

- To what degree has my culture anesthetized my hatred of sexual sin?
- How vulnerable do I perceive myself to be for committing sexual sin?
- Have I made myself accountable to someone else for my sexual purity?
- How aware am I that I may be more vulnerable to sexual sin in a cross-cultural situation than in my own culture?

If single:

- How satisfied and content am I with being single. Am I willing to trust God in this?

If married:

- Is my sexual relationship with my spouse healthy enough to survive the onslaught of the spiritual, emotional and physical stresses our lives will be exposed to in the months to come?
- How would I describe my sexual relationship with my spouse during the past six months?
- How satisfied/content am I with being married?

Love the Lord Your God with All Your Soul

1. Spiritual Vitality

- How can I best describe the current state of my relationship with God?
- What has God revealed to me or accomplished in me recently?
- What new spiritual discipline could I incorporate into my life in the coming year?
- Am I aware of the schemes of the Enemy and prepared to respond in spiritual warfare? Are there spiritual strongholds in the host culture to which I need to respond through warfare praying?
- Are my public and private self the same?
- Do I spend as much time listening to God as talking to Him?

2. Relationship to God's Word

- What is my growth plan for feeding myself from God's Word?

3. Communication with God

- How would I describe my communication with God? How would I describe the ways I communicate, the depth of communication, the frequency?
- (If married) What habits have we developed/needs have we recognized in our communication with God as a couple?

4. Relationship with God

- How has my relationship with God changed in the past year?
- How has my relationship with God made a difference in my attitudes and emotions in the past year?
- What areas do I still need to submit to Him?
- Is there anything in my life that inhibits the power and fruit of the

- Holy Spirit?
- (If married) In what ways do we as a couple actually encourage each other, or draw each other to the Lord?

Love the Lord your God with All Your Mind

1. Lifelong Learning

- What are my growth plans for ongoing learning (formal and informal)? What will I need to be more effective in my ministry? My life skills? My relationships?
- Do I cultivate the attitude of a lifelong learner?

2. Mind Set

- What is my vision/dream for the coming year? Pretend that you are describing it to your best friend. How will you describe it? What words will you use?
- Is this description an example of a habit of seeing things in a positive light or a negative light?
- In what ways can I encourage myself to have a positive attitude in difficult situations?

Love the Lord Your God with All Your Strength

1. Physical Well Being

- What is the present state of my physical health and energy levels?
- Does my present state of health enhance or limit my effectiveness as a person and in my ministry?
- What will I do to contribute to my physical fitness in the coming year?
- Have I followed through on Dr. Gamble's recommendation in my last medical report?
- Am I taking advantage of IHM's services and keeping my MANGO file up to date?

2. Management of Stress

- What unique or unexpected stresses did I encounter during the past year?
- What strategies did I use to handle the stress during the past year?

- What kinds of stress do I find most destructive, discouraging, debilitating to me?
- What will I do in the immediate future to grow in my ability to better handle these stressors?

3. Sabbath Rest

- Have I developed a pattern of Sabbath rest and incorporated it into my lifestyle?
- How do I respond when ministry demands make it challenging to practice Sabbath?

4. Management of Resources

- Do I have a plan in place for tithing and saving for retirement?
- Is my will and power of attorney current? For parents: Have I cared for the guardianship of my children?

Love Your Neighbour As Yourself

1. Interdependence

- How willing am I to acknowledge my need for help from others?
- When I require help from others, what is my usual course of action?
- Do I usually take the initiative to reach out to give of myself and my resources when others need them?

2. Servant's Heart

- What does having a "servant's heart" mean to me? What is my mindset toward serving others in the coming year?

3. Attitudes toward Authority

- Who in authority will I be facing with whom I may have a challenge?
- How well am I doing at applying what the Bible says, especially when:
 - I disagree with them
 - I do not respect, and/or I do not like the one in authority over me?
 - What do I usually do when those in authority over me do

or say something I disagree with? Fight? Quit? Dialogue? Argue? Do my work half-heartedly? Withhold my support and encouragement?

4. Defences

- Looking ahead, are there people and situations where I know I will react by putting up a defence?
- What am I doing right now to grow my understanding of and lessen my defences?

5. Need for Growth

- In what ways do I need to grow in order to be more effective in my relationships with others?

6. Honest, Open and Transparent

- Do I feel I can be honest, open and transparent (H.O.T.) when appropriate? How discerning am I to contexts, situations that require varying degrees of being H.O.T.?
- What kinds of things or situations can I anticipate that will keep me from being H.O.T.?
- In what ways am I growing in this area of being H.O.T.?

7. Impact Awareness

- What difference do I want to make in others' lives in the coming year? What will it take for me to make that impact?
- How skilled am I at picking up the verbal and non-verbal signals when I (and/or my children) negatively impact others?

8. Confronting

- How willing am I to confront when confrontation is needed?
- Is there a person or situation with whom I anticipate a confrontation?
- How willing am I to be confronted? How do I respond when I am confronted?

9. Listening

- How would my family/best friends describe me as a listener, especially regarding:

- my verbal and non-verbal signals that indicate I really care and am interested?
- my ability to enter into their feelings with them?
- my ability to put into my own words what I am hearing them say?
- my ability to respond positively when they put what they think I am saying into their own words?
- my ability to draw them out/ invite and encourage them to share as much as they desire to?
- my willingness to hear the whole story without jumping to conclusions, interrupting, and/or giving premature advice?

10. Intimacy

- Do I believe I need to be close to others in order to be effective in a cross-cultural ministry?
- How will I build an intimate relationship with my colleagues on my team?
- How open am I with my accountability partner?

11. Forgiveness

- Realising that forgiveness is a process, who in my life am I right now in the process of forgiving?
- What more do I need to do to complete the process?
- Is there anyone I am not willing to forgive?

If married:

12. Marriage Strength

- Over the past year, what trends have I seen in the quality of my relationship with my spouse?
- What happens to our relationship when one or both of us are under high stress?
- Are my spouse and I in agreement that this ministry is right for each of us?
- Do I believe our marriage relationship is healthy enough to survive the onslaught of the spiritual, emotional, and physical stresses of life as we return to the mission field?
- How would I describe my communication with my spouse in relation to the depth, frequency, etc.? Does this meet my needs?

His/her needs? If not, what do I do about it?

- How do I believe we would do in an isolated setting if we had no one to talk to in our language but each other, or in a situation where contact with others of our own culture would be limited?
- If we tend to compete with each other, does our competition usually draw us closer or drive us further apart?
- In what ways are we friends?

13. Family Strength/Family-As-Ministry

- What has happened to the quality of our family relationships during the past year?
- What have we been doing to build a stronger family unit?
- How enthusiastic are our children about our ministry? What are we doing as parents to enhance this?
- In what ways can we apply the concept of family-as-ministry in the coming year?
- How would I describe the communication I have with my children in relation to frequency, depth, etc.? Do they express verbally or nonverbally that their needs are being met or not being met?
- Is the quality of my relationship with my children such that our relationship will thrive in the onslaught of the spiritual, emotional, and physical stresses of life?
- Is our family life sufficiently happy and stable that it supports and nourishes me, enabling me to relate to others and do my job without being preoccupied with family problems?
- Have I been able to maintain emotional nearness to my children? If they are to be separated from me in this next term for reasons of education, how will I strengthen these emotional bonds?

July 2017

Burnout Prevention Assessment

Dr. John Sturt, Auckland, New Zealand

Fawcett, John. (Ed.). (2003). *Stress and Trauma Handbook*. Monrovia, CA: World Vision

Instructions	In response to each question write the number of it's rating that fits your present reality on the line preceding each question.	
_____ 01	Do you have a full day off to do what you like? Weekly (5); Frequently (4); Occasionally (1); Never (0)	
_____ 02	Do you have time out for yourself to be quiet, think, meditate, pray? Daily (5); Frequently (3); Occasionally (1); Seldom or Never (0)	
_____ 03	Do you have good vacations, about three or four weeks in one year? Every year (5); Occasionally (3); Rarely (1); Almost never (0)	
_____ 04	Do you do some aerobic exercise for at least twenty minutes at a time? Three to five times a week (5); Occasionally (3); Never (0)	
_____ 05	Do you do something for fun – play a game? Go to a movie or concert? Weekly (4); Monthly (3); Occasionally (1); Never (0)	
_____ 06	Do you practice any muscle relaxation or slow breathing technique? Daily (5); Frequently (4); Occasionally (2); Rarely (0)	
_____ 07	Do you listen to your body messages (symptoms, illnesses etc)? Always (5); Mostly (3); Occasionally (1); Seldom or Never (0)	
_____ 08	<i>If single:</i> Do you have friends with whom you share at a feeling level? Regularly (5); Frequently (4); Occasionally (3); Seldom or Never (0)	
_____ 09	<i>If married:</i> How often do you share intimately? Daily (5); Occasionally (3); Seldom (2); Not at all (lonely) (0)	
_____ 10	Do you share your stressors, cares, problems and needs with others or God? Regularly (5); Frequently (3); Occasionally (2); Never (0)	
_____ 11	How would you describe your ability to communicate with others? Excellent (5); Fair – but working on it (3); With difficulty (1); Poor (0)	
_____ 12	Do you sleep well (for at least seven to nine hours a night)? Almost every night (3); Frequently (2); Occasionally (1); Never (0)	
_____ 13	Are you able to say no to demands on you when this is appropriate? Always (3); Mostly (2); Seldom (1); Never (0)	
_____ 14	Do you set realistic goals for your life, both short term and long term? Regularly (5); Occasionally (3); Seldom (1); Never (0)	
_____ 15	Are you careful to eat a balanced diet? Always (5); Most of the time (3); Not often (1); A lot of "junk food" (0)	
_____ 16	Is your weight appropriate for your height? Consistently (3); Yes, with difficulty (2); Over weight (0)	
_____ 17	How would you describe the amount of touch you get in your life? As much as you need (5); Frequent (4); Occasional (1); Seldom (0)	
_____ 18	Can you deal with anger without repressing it or dumping it on others? Always (5); Mostly (4); Occasionally (2); Rarely (1); Never (0)	
_____ 19	How often do you have a good "belly laugh"? At least daily (3); Frequently (2); Seldom (1); Never (0)	
_____ 20	Do you have a creative hobby time (gardening, reading, music, etc)? Weekly (4); Occasionally (2); Rarely (1); Never (0)	
_____ 21	Do you nurture your self esteem? Regularly (5); Frequently (3); Occasionally (1); Rarely or Never (0)	
_____ 22	Do you practice forgiveness of those who have hurt you? Regularly (5); Occasionally (3); Rarely (1); Never (0)	
_____ 23	Have you dealt with old hurts and "baggage" from the past? Yes (5); Most of them (3); Much remains to do (0)	
TOTAL	Significance of your score	<i>Good skills (80-100); Moderately good skills (70-80) Lifestyle changes needed (50-70); Seek help (0-50)</i>

Resources

Websites

- Mobile Member Care Toolbox (in English, French, Korean, and Spanish): <https://www.mmct.org/>
- Transition Curve: <http://www.mmct.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Transition-Curve-Marion-Dicke.pdf>
- Common Reactions to Trauma - Children: <http://www.mmct.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Common-Reactions-to-Trauma-Children.pdf>
- Common Reactions to Trauma - Adults: <http://www.mmct.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Common-Reactions-to-Trauma-Adults.pdf>
- Developing Stress Hardiness: <http://www.mmct.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Developing-Stress-Hardiness.pdf>
- Born for Adversity - Joining God in His Purposes of Affliction by Scott Schaum: <http://storage.cloversites.com/mmctmobilemembercareteam/documents/Born%20for%20Adversity%20-%20Scott%20Schaum.pdf>
- A Call to Excellence: <https://transformcma.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/4.-A-Call-to-Excellence-May-2019.pdf>
- Top Ten Practices for Parenting MKs Well: <https://michelephoenix.com/2015/01/top-ten-practices-for-parenting-mks/>
- Spiritual Disciplines Born of the Travail of Language Learning: <https://missionexus.org/spiritual-disciplines-born-of-the-travail-of-language-learning/>
- Moving from Solitude to Community to Ministry by Henri Nouwen: https://entermission.typepad.com/my_weblog/files/moving_from_solitude_to_community_to_ministry_henri_nouwen.pdf
- Global Vault: <https://globalvault.ca/>
 - Member Care Video Voices: <https://globalvault.ca/2011/08/19/member-care-video-voices/>
 - Global Missions Podcast: <https://globalmissionspodcast.com/>
- Global Missions Toolbox: <https://globalmissionstoolbox.com/>
- More (Missionary Opportunities for Resourcing and Equipping) Network Resource Library: <https://mnrl.outreach.ca/>

Additional Books for Further Reading



Worth Keeping by Lim Hay

“I am convinced if we put into practice its recommendations we will see more effective missionaries who feel valued as servants of the living God. *Worth Keeping* should be required reading for all mission leaders and local church mission teams.” - Geoff Tunncliffe, International Director, World Evangelical Alliance, Canada.



Doing Member Care Well by Kelly O'Donnell

This book explores how member care is being practiced around the world to equip sending organizations as they intentionally support their mission/aid personnel. The information provided includes personal accounts, guidelines, case studies, worksheets, and practical advice from all over the globe.



Trauma & Resilience by Frauke and Charles Schaefer

This book brings together theological perspectives, personal stories, and spiritual, psychological, community, and medical resources. It is research-based and at the same time practical. This is a handbook for church and mission leaders, peer supporters, counselors, those in personnel and member care roles, as well as those who suffer.

Canadian Alliance Missions Engagement

More books that tell our story



The God You May Not Know: Ordinary People Leading Extraordinary Lives

In *A God You May Not Know*, Ron and Charles provide a compelling collection of true-life stories. This autobiographical material by people who have "been there, done that" is both informative and inspirational. As Alliance missionaries, when they tell their stories, they are telling our story. They provide a window through which you catch a glimpse of our mission.

Mel Sylvester, President of C&MA in Canada 1980-1992

If you don't like to read long biographies but love short stories, if the exploits of extraordinarily gifted individuals often leave you wondering whether God ever uses ordinary people like you to accomplish His global agenda, if you find yourself wondering whether the Gospel is really the power of God unto salvation for all nations, if you want to understand why "missions" is part of the DNA of our denomination, then this book may have been written just for you. Just the introduction made me want to read it.

Sunder Krishnan, former Pastor, Rexdale Alliance Church

This book should come with a warning. Consumption may result in focused resolve to be about God's mission, a spirit stirred towards the least-reached peoples of the world, and a heart that bursts with godly pride of that which he extraordinarily accomplishes through his ordinary, faithful and Spirit-filled people.

Doug Balzer, Western Canadian District



The God Made Known: Through Ordinary People Leading Extraordinary Lives

What joy to read through *The God Made Known*, written by and about people I've worked with or heard about over the past 35 years. These men and women are my heroes, choosing to respond to God's call to make Jesus known among the least-reached people of the world. In my work as Director of Member Care, I often got to see the price they paid for choosing to live in some of the most challenging areas of the world, with new and strange diseases, environmental hazards, inadequate infrastructures, increased violence and often unstable governments. I am grateful to those who have taken the time to write their stories. And I praise God for the fruit that He has borne through the lives of these His saints.

Judith Wiebe, Spiritual Director, former Director of Member Care, Global Ministries

The God Made Known should be required reading for anyone ministering or leading within our Alliance churches, as well as for anyone looking to be inspired and encouraged by God's hand and provision in the joys and deep challenges of reaching out to the nations with the Good News of Christ. How does God work in the world? For some insight, read through the pages of this compelling history.

Clyde Glass, Lead Pastor, Southview Alliance Church, Calgary

The compilation of stories in this book reflects people empowered by the Spirit, living on mission and bringing God's Kingdom to earth. They tell our story, the story of The Christian and Missionary Alliance around the world. I am grateful for the godly examples of men and women taking risks to go where others may have never ventured. They inspire the readers' own pursuits of going to those on the margins, to those often forgotten and in need of the good news. I highly recommend this book.

Glendyne Gerrard, Director of Defend Dignity, Toronto



Making God Known: To Least-Reached People in Extraordinary Ways

This book tells our story. You'll recognize names and legendary accounts from our shared past. As with any good family narrative, you'll also discover connections and explanations about people and initiatives that were previously unknown to you. It is like reading a collection of family stories. This book chronicles how our denomination got the gospel message out to people and places where Christ is unknown. It recounts how it all came together and the people who made it happen in a world where there was war, uncertainty, chaos, and upheaval. We learn how our international workers leveraged their talents to reach others, and in the reading, we become aware of the profound sacrifices they made and the burdens they bore. And throughout our stories, we see how God is writing a bigger story of love.

Pamela M. Nordstrom, Ph.D., Vice President, Academic Affairs, Ambrose University

This book unfolds like a theography of mission. It traces God's work and faithfulness through the continued development and formation of the international missions movement of the C&MA in Canada. Giving access to Jesus to the whole world, especially the least-reached, is at the heartbeat of the C&MA, and this book functions like an EKG of that movement in Canada, vibrating with the pulse of Jesus.

Bryce Ashlin-Mayo, Lead Pastor, Westlife Church, Calgary

This book is like holding a "missions convention" in your hand. As I read, I found myself once again enraptured by the stories of what God is doing in and through His people around the world. I was given a fresh look at the "unfinished mission" we all share. I was inspired by the stories of pioneer work, creative ventures, new opportunities abroad and at home, and it prompted me to consider how I might engage further with Jesus in His mission. And as I put down the book, I found myself once again raising my hand and whispering the words, "Here I am, LORD, send me."

Kirk Cowman, Lead Pastor, Living Hope Alliance Church, Regina

To download a zip file containing a PDF of:

- *The God You May Not Know*
- *The God Made Known*
- *Making God Known*

click on the link below and the download will start immediately.

<https://www.cmacan.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Book-Series-CMA.zip>



On Mission: Stories of Those Who Went, Volumes 1-3

contain the stories of more Canadian Alliance international workers. These books celebrate the redeeming work of God and at the same time provide some accountability to the people of God who faithfully provided sons and daughters, finances and prayer, for the mission of God.

They describe how missionaries in obedience to God's call engaged in His redeeming activities all over the world by going to some of the toughest and most difficult places. They persevered, some under horrible conditions, having survived traumatic events, in order to see communities of faith established amongst least-reached peoples.

Today, we rejoice, that in many nations of the world there are vibrant congregations, some small, some large that are living out the Gospel in their communities.



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Around the globe Alliance workers are actively reaching out to the least-reached people groups of this world. The Global Advance Fund is the primary means of providing for our workers.

thealliancecanada.ca/give

On mission

CARING FOR THOSE WHO GO

The chapters in this book show how the international worker's sending church, team leader, agency office, and member care provider can all better lean into their roles; namely, being the presence of Jesus walking alongside the worker and "keeping" them as they carry out the Great Commission.

"I'll be with you as you do this, day after day after day, right up to the end of the age."

(Matthew 28:20 MSG)

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& Wil Stewart



global vault

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