



Why Do Missionary Care?

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After I had sent out my surveys for my dissertation, as they were returned, I placed the envelopes unopened on the coffee table in my living room. When the pile of envelopes covered most of my coffee table and a week had gone by with no further returns, I sat down, opened all the envelopes, unfolded the questionnaires, stacked them in a neat pile, and began to read. Two hours later when my husband returned home, he found me visibly moved and tears rolling down my cheeks. He asked, "What's wrong?" I pointed to the questionnaires and said, "Too much pain!"

I sent out 301 surveys to returned missionaries and their families. Over 50 of these were returned because the respondents had moved and left no forwarding address. But 161 correctly completed surveys were returned. One questionnaire was returned with only one question checked which read, "This questionnaire was too painful to answer at this time. I am returning it unanswered in the self addressed, stamped envelope." Almost 90 people who received the questionnaire failed to respond. In addition to the questionnaire, I interviewed 27 families, 11 of whom also filled out questionnaires.

My dissertation on returned missionaries added little new data to the then growing field of research on reentry. The best parts of the dissertation are the two appendices which contain the replies to two open-ended questions:

1. *What kind of advice would you give to young families about to leave the United States to do mission work?*
2. *Is there anything you would like to express about reentry that was not covered in this questionnaire?*

It was the answers to those two questions that troubled me. Do I believe in missionary care because pain is a bad thing? After all, the apostle Paul advocated that we boast in our sufferings, because our sufferings bring about endurance; endurance brings God's approval, and God's approval gives us hope.¹ Paraphrasing Storti², who says that simply because parts of the missionary experience "can be frustrating, lonely, and generally unpleasant at times is not to say that it is a harmful experience or a negative one. Frustration, loneliness, and unpleasantness are very often the precursors of insight and personal growth. Maybe it doesn't always feel good, but then feeling good isn't much of a standard for measuring experience."

¹ Romans 5:3ff

² Storti, Craig. The Art of Coming Home. Intercultural Press: Yarmouth, ME. 1997

In reality, pain is unavoidable and missionary care will not eliminate all of the pain missionaries experience. What is important is that we eliminate unnecessary pain. There are war stories whirring around in my head. Let me tell you one. Names will not be used, and place names have been changed to protect confidentiality.

Every Sunday morning when we worked in Amsterdam, we had a ritual in our house. Every room in the apartment was tidied and I always got up earlier than usual. Besides cooking breakfast, I cooked as much of our lunch as I could before we left the house, because three out of every four Sundays, we would bring guests home with us. These guests were often Americans who took time out of their schedules to find the local church and worship with us. One Sunday we brought a couple from South Africa home with us and a man from North Carolina. Our South African guests were talkative, and we learned a lot about their home church and their country. After some time passed my husband turned to our other guest and tried to involve him into the conversation a bit more. This is his story.

Nine months earlier he, his wife, and three children arrived in a northern European country. They were sponsored by his home church. He had been their preacher. They decided they needed to do mission work. The family did not speak the language of the country they decided to work in, and they had no mission or cultural preparation before coming. Upon arrival they went to a hotel where they stayed for six weeks until they got a small apartment. They had their furniture delivered from the nearest port and set up housekeeping. The children were 16, 15, and 9.

The parents enrolled them in national schools as they did not have funds for an international school. Besides, there was no international school in the city in which they settled. The national schools were academically advanced in comparison to the schools in North Carolina. They failed every subject. They received no help. The children endured harsh reprimands from the teachers and relentless teasing from the other students. There were no extra curricular activities like sports, where the children might have been able to excel. Football (soccer) was played in clubs and in the street. The two older boys were awkward, but tried to learn soccer from the neighbor children.

The wife was admonished by the landlord because she had not taken her turn and scrubbed the public concrete stairway leading up to her apartment. She had not scrubbed the main door to the apartment and had not swept the street and curb in front of the apartment building. The couple had not been able to read the lease they had signed and did not know this was part of the lease agreement. What the couple did not understand was the shame the apartment dwellers felt because their residence was "unkempt" and the resulting anger. After this incident, she was careful to take her turn with these duties. Her husband could not do it for her as that was seen as unmanly. The wife was also told to remove her yellow and blue curtains as only white curtains were acceptable. She cut up one of her white sheets and pinned in a lining so that the curtains looked white from the street. They found the neighbors unfriendly. The husband found American methods of evangelism were not working in this country. Unknowingly, the family made many cultural mistakes. The family perceived those they came in contact with as cold and harsh. The stress was overwhelming. The family began to deteriorate. Since they were members of a very conservative church, they did not

contact any other missionaries from more "liberal" churches of Christ in the country for help. Our guest had just put his family on a plane for the states and the next day he was going to be in Rotterdam to put their belongings on a ship. Thus began my introduction into the need for missionary training and care.

There were many positive remarks made to the two open ended questions in my dissertation. The following statements were some of the more negative quotes:

Prepare yourselves for culture shock and the fact that few churches will stand behind you in the field. Only the strong survive.

Be prepared to be forgotten when you get there. We went 516 days with no mail from elders.

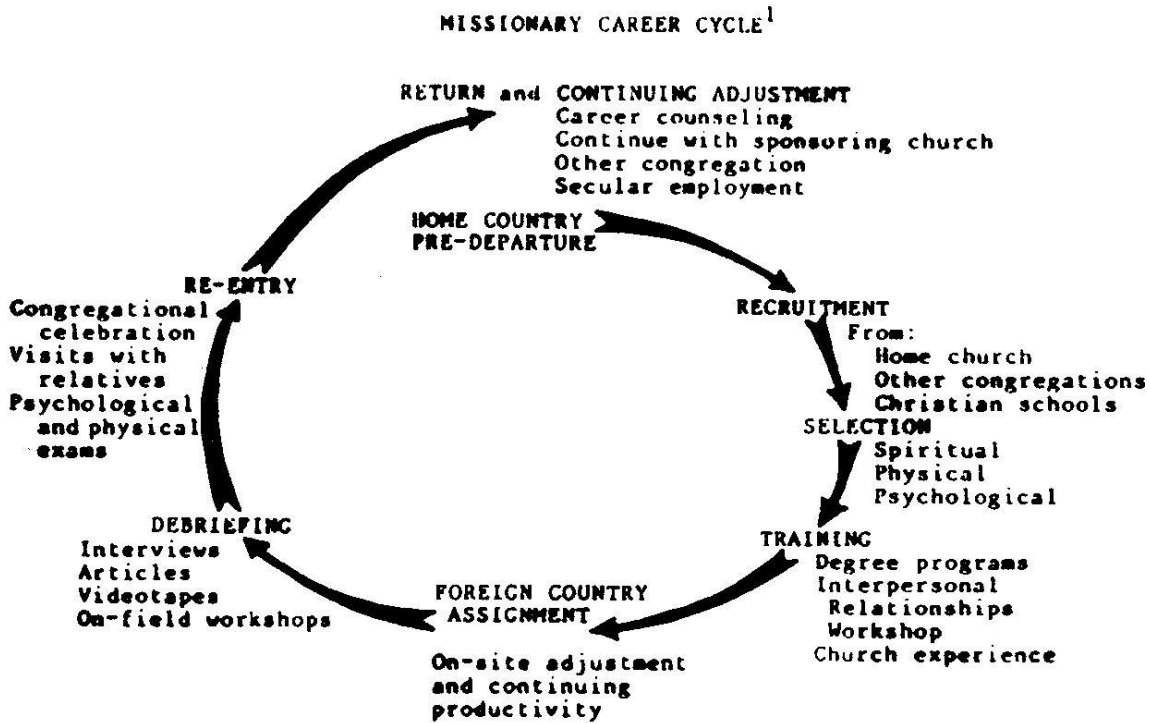
My wife's first response was, "Don't [go]." Her second response was, "Go when your children are young or already away from home, so your daughter won't marry an _____."

Third response (hers & mine): Have an agreement with the church before you leave in regard to re-entry settlement in the U.S. (If the church had given us boots and coats even, it would have helped a great deal.)

I feel the lack of genuine interest and commitment on the part of the supporting congregations led to minimal financial support – both on the field and afterwards. Inadequate financial support led to terrible stress on the family, contributing greatly to our divorce. Divorce, in turn, makes it impossible for me to return to the mission field, which is what I would most love to do in life. (And my ex-wife feels much the same.)

Would these responses have been different had there been missionary care? Possibly! The purpose of missionary care is to help missionaries remain whole throughout each stage of the missionary career cycle. It involves supportive relationships and services which promote the missionary's ongoing adjustment and growth.³

³ John Powell in Kelly O'Donnell (Ed.), *Missionary Care*. Pasadena, California: William Carey Library, 1992



¹Adler, 1980

Missionary Career Cycle⁴

Missionary Attrition

Missionary Care can help with the avoidable attrition of missionaries. No studies that I know of (and I inquired) have been conducted in churches of Christ or on our Christian college campuses about missionary attrition. Protestant mission agencies report the following reasons for attrition in order of importance.⁵

1. Normal Retirement
2. Child(ren)
3. Change of Job
4. Lack of home support
5. Problems with Peers (this was number 4 for U.S. Protestant missionaries)
6. Personal Concerns
7. Disagreement with agency
8. Inadequate commitment
9. Lack of call
10. Outside marriage
11. Immature spiritual life

⁴ This missionary career cycle was adapted with permission by Clyde Austin, former professor of Psychology at ACU. The original source is Adler, Nancy. *Re-entry: Managing Cross-Cultural Transitions*. *Organization Studies*, 1981, 6, 3, pp. 341-356.

⁵ Brierley, Peter. *Missionary Attrition: The ReMAP Research Report* in Taylor, William D. (Ed) *Too Valuable to Lose*. Pasadena, California: William Carey Library, 1997.

12. Marriage/family conflict
13. Poor cultural adaptation
14. Problems with local leaders
15. Elderly parents
16. Inappropriate training
17. Lack of job satisfaction
18. Political Crisis
19. Death in service
20. Dismissal by agency
21. Immoral lifestyle
22. Language problems
23. Theological Reasons
24. Other

Twenty nine percent of the reasons for leaving missions for American missionaries were unpreventable.⁶ Taylor⁷ estimated world-wide preventable attrition at 71 percent. Preventable attrition included six major categories: 1) marriage and family reasons; 2) agency reasons; 3) personal reasons; 4) team reasons; 5) cultural reasons: and 6) work related reasons. Early intervention in the missionary life cycle, even before departure, would have made a difference in these attrition rates. Planned care would have decreased attrition as well. It should be noted that special attention should be given to families. Children need pre-field orientation as much as their parents. Leaving friends, family (especially grandparents), and school because of their parent's choices can be traumatic. Better pre-field screening would be helpful in discovering marital problems before going to the field. The emotional health of the entire family may affect the missionary's performance. Missionaries whose spouses are unhappy must often return prematurely at great financial cost to the church and emotional cost to the family. International business has discovered that "International assignments are never viable solutions to family problems – invariably they only cause greater turmoil."⁸

Conflict with other missionaries also appears to be a major concern. Moore⁹ found that the number one problem for Church of Christ missionaries on the field was other missionaries. A study by Matthews,¹⁰ while ACU Bible and Missions professor, encompassed 42 teams from Churches of Christ on four continents. The teams reported that 75 percent of their team training had been concentrated in the area of strategic planning. He found that pre-field "mission training in churches of Christ is decidedly "task" rather than "maintenance" oriented; production rather than people gets the lion's share of attention." As a result, only 25 percent of teams reported having a "group-created game plan to which they held each other accountable (p.8). Twelve

⁶ Elkins, Phil. *Attrition in the U.S.A. and Canada* in Taylor, William D. (Ed.) *Too Valuable to Lose: Exploring the Causes and Cures of Missionary Attrition*. Pasadena, California: William Carey Library, 1997

⁷ Taylor, William. *Examining the Iceberg Called Attrition* in Taylor, William (Ed.), *Too Valuable to Lose: Exploring the Causes and Cures of Missionary Attrition*. Pasadena, California: William Carey Library, 1997.

⁸ Copeland, Lennie and Griggs, Lewis. *Going Internations: How to Make Friends and Deal Effectively in the Global Marketplace*. New York: Random House, 1985.

⁹ Moore, L. A., *A Study of Reverse Culture Shock in North American Church of Christ Missionaries*. Unpublished Master's Thesis, Abilene Christian University, 1981, *Masters Abstracts*, 1982, 20, 314. (University Microfilms No. 13-18,268).

¹⁰ Matthews, Ed. (Missions and Bible faculty at ACU) *Does Team Formation Training in Churches of Christ Prepare Students for Mission Field Realities?* Report, TOM, February, 2001.

percent of teams reported that everyone does their own thing; 15 percent stated that one member calls all the shots; and 43 percent of mission teams have a game plan but do not follow it (p. 9). Matthews stated that this “does not bode well for the advance of the gospel” (p. 11). Sadly, 55 percent of Matthew’s respondents reported that conflict resolution was either omitted or ineffective in their team formation training. Ninety three percent of the respondents stated that interpersonal relations was (or would have been) the most helpful thing in their mission preparation (p. 11). Screening and training are not cure-alls, but it is an important factor in reducing attrition.

International business understands the importance of pre-departure training. In 1985 data suggested that somewhere between 20 and 50 percent of international relocations ended with premature return. In developing countries, the failure rate was as high as 70 percent.¹¹ Since 1985 pre-departure training of executives has increased considerably, reducing attrition rates. Unfortunately, spouses are usually excluded from such training and are left on their own to figure out their new roles in the host country.¹² Even international business hasn’t ironed out all the wrinkles yet. Let’s not make that mistake in missions. During the expatriate cycle international business continues to train and teach new skills to their colleagues overseas. The church could take a lesson here. International business has even taken note that reentry can cause numerous difficulties.

International business has found that pre-departure training has resulted in the saving of over \$200,000.00 per person sent overseas. Attrition is costly to international business. The resulting human pain cannot be calculated in dollars. No one has calculated the cost of early attrition to churches and to missionaries and their families, but bad experiences have caused some churches to simply withdraw from foreign missions and to concentrate on domestic missions instead. Unfortunately, some returned missionaries and their families have become the walking wounded among us.

The Missionary Career Life Cycle:

Missionary care, available throughout the Missionary Career Cycle can eliminate some of the attrition of missionaries and churches are now experiencing.

Pre-Field:

Recruiting often takes place on the Christian college campus or as we have seen of late, through the Bible Chair ministry on state campuses. Sometimes recruits are home-grown, i.e., they are the products of the local church. When looking for a missionary there are some key factors in the selection process.¹³ Candidates need to be spiritually mature and have the ability to use and apply God’s word (knowledge alone is insufficient). Their motivation for serving and going must be God-centered. The recruit should already be involved in a church and/or para-church organization, such as L.S.T.,

¹¹ Copeland, Lennie and Griggs, Lewis. *Going International: How to Make Friends and Deal Effectively in the Global Marketplace*. New York: Random House, 1985.

¹² Pascoe, Robin. *A Moveable Marriage*. Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada: Expatriate Press, 2003.

¹³ The underlined key factors were taken from Dodd, Lois and Dodd, Larry. *Selection, Training, Member Care and Professional Ethics: Choosing the Right People and Caring for Them with Integrity*. Paper presented at the IFMA/EFMA Personnel Conference, Orlando, Florida, December 4-6, 1997.

A.I.M. or other such like ministries. We are finding today that young people may have a passion for ministry and missions and have little connection to an organized church.¹⁴ Premature returns from the field have included such fundamental matters as doubt about faith and lack of spiritual maturity, which careful pre-departure selection could have uncovered.¹⁵

Being emotionally healthy and mature is a must.¹⁶ ¹⁷ An emotionally immature person on the mission field will create hardship for others and s/he will eventually desert the work. It is irresponsible to send out those who lack the emotional resources for endurance. It hinders the work and it destroys people. Relationship maturity is another essential characteristic of a missionary recruit. A careful look at how the recruit has handled his/her relationships in the past needs to be critically evaluated. Another key factor is the ability to cope. How does the person handle stress and hardships? Is s/he resilient? Adaptable? Flexible? Does s/he have a sense of humor? There is also a need to see how the person handles menial tasks. Is there a desire to be a servant, and if so, how is that demonstrated? Job skills and work experience need to be checked out. At the end of this paper is a guide that can be used to judge job performance, regardless of job level.

The ability to re-create, reuse, restructure, recycle and make-do, and make new are all attributes of resourcefulness, a needed skill in mission work. This factor should perhaps be listed first instead of last, but recruits need to have put together a theology of suffering. Popular gospel in the United States is the health and wealth gospel. If missionaries assume that obedience automatically brings blessings, disillusionment will set in and coming home becomes a real option. Hebrews 11 bears witness to the fact that not all the faithful received the blessing in this life.

Pre-field training for missionaries is important. Elkins¹⁸ discovered that generally there was a lack of appreciation for pre-departure training on many issues among many mission agencies. Some agencies do not require either formal or informal training in missions, cross-cultural studies, or orientation to the field before departure. "This lack of training and preparation is sometimes rationalized on the basis of:

1. It costs too much in dollars and energy (to give the right tools and training).
2. The need over there is so urgent you must go at once.
3. We don't have enough time to train you.
4. Anyone can do the job who has a subjective sense of God's will.

¹⁴Jim Beck, January 27, 2006, MRN Staff Retreat to Study Post-Modernism, Prestoncrest Church of Christ.

¹⁵ Platt, Daryl, *A Call to Partnership in the Missionary Selection Process* in Taylor, William (Ed.), *Too Valuable to Lose: Exploring the Causes and Cures of Missionary Attrition*. Pasadena, California: William Carey Library, 1997.

¹⁶ Steve Allison and Brian Stogner addressed screening and testing issues at the Global Missions Conference.

¹⁷ Churches can expect that the "pool of bruised individuals" to increase in the near future.

Recent studies from A Report to the Nation from the Commission on Children at Risk *Hard-Wired to Connect: The New Scientific Case for Authoritative Communities* (2003) stated that "at least one of every four adolescents in the U.S. is currently at serious risk of not achieving productive adulthood...about 21 percent of U.S. children ages nine to 17 have a diagnosable mental or addictive disorder associated with at least minimum impairment. These high numbers appear to reflect actual increases in these problems, not changes in methods of treatment" (p. 8). The commission further stated that "some of the basic foundations of childhood appear currently to be at best anemic, in the sense of weak and inadequate to foster full human flourishing, and at worst, toxic, inadvertently depressing health and engendering emotional distress and mental illness" (p. 10).

¹⁸ Elkins, Phil. *Attrition in the U.S.A. and Canada* in Taylor, William D. (Ed.) *Too Valuable to Lose: Exploring the Causes and Cures of Missionary Attrition*. Pasadena, California: William Carey Library, 1997.

5. You can 'do all things through Christ.'¹⁹

Increased attrition is the result. Unnecessary human pain is the result. Churches of Christ need to take note that screened and trained missionaries do better on the field.

On the field

Missionaries, once they get on the field, should have the ability to maintain a prayer life, a personal devotional life, know how to feed him or herself with the word of God, and know how to lead another person to Christ. Missionaries and their teams need to know how to deal with culture shock, conflict, disequilibrium, and pile-up stress. Learning these skills will not prevent having to practice these skills.

Culture shock has been likened to extreme mental frustration. The family usually suffers through culture shock together causing family intimacy to increase. Missionary kids often say that their best friends are their parents. A "we/us" vs. "them" mentality may manifest itself in missionary families.

After surviving the initial culture shock and managing to get past stages two and three of culture shock, and basking in the fact they have made it to stage four, missionaries still experience on-going culture stress. The following formula explains on-going culture stress.

Involvement	+	Value Differences	+	Frustration	+	Temperament Differences	+	Unknown Factors	=	Culture Stress
Acceptance	+	Communication	+	Emotional Security	+	Spiritual Resources				

The different elements on the top line increase the level of stress missionaries experience on the field, while increasing the elements on the second line decreases the level of stress experienced.²⁰

Adjustment to a foreign country is often a family affair. Changing cultures is stressful. The more involvement the family has with the host culture, the more the cultural differences will affect the family, however, more cultural involvement is necessary if the family is to be effective in its mission. The greater the temperament differences between the family and the host people, the greater the culture shock experience tends to be.

Every missionary experiences on-going culture stress. It is unavoidable and after a while just becomes part of the fragment of life. Not knowing when the electricity will come on again, having to get up at 4 a.m. to fill every container in the house with water, wading through piles of bureaucratic red tape to be told to come back the next day for a stamp on the passport (something needed yesterday in order to stay), waiting in line at the meat store for hours to get something to eat for the family and seeing the door close in front of one's face are hard to take in the early days of mission work. What

¹⁹ Dodd and Dodd, *ibid.*

²⁰ Dye, T.W., *Stress Producing Factors in Cultural Adjustment*. *Missiology*, 1974, 2, pp. 61-77.

keeps missionaries on the field is increasing the elements on the bottom line. It takes concerted effort to adjust to a different culture.

I emailed some missionaries and asked about their stress levels. I promised anonymity. Here are a few of the statements I received:

- We have had several robberies, witnessed several counts of mob justice, church members dying from AIDS, deception by church members, etc.
- We've had dogs poisoned, houses broken into by trusted workers, had workers thrown in jail and make death threats against other workers. We have been taken advantage of at service situations, etc.
- We've had several babies born over here, one very major surgery and a couple of minor ones. One of us witnessed firsthand the aftermath of a bus bombing, seen many really bad wrecks – one of our team-mates had a wreck.
- A missionary acquaintance from another town was murdered. We had a MIG do a flyover of our houses, and had Ebola break out in our town.
- Out of 10 – my stress level is probably a 6 or 7 due to 1) normal cross-cultural adjustment and frustrations with language learning; 2) chronic pain due to some poor med treatment in 3rd world; 3) menopause causing me not to feel well for 18 months and 4) caring for children.
- Elections! Need I say more?
- The most traumatic for us as a couple was the split of our team.
- The birth of our still born baby has been our worst stress.
- The death of our colleague's wife was stressful. She left several young children. Of course, the only thing our colleague could do was go home. He couldn't raise these children here by himself.
- Finding a place to live. We lived with another missionary family in their small apartment for 3 months before we finally got an apartment. Our children were used to playing in the yard. After my wife caught our 4-year-old standing on her tricycle looking over the balcony from our 13th floor apartment, the children were banned from the balcony. It takes hours out of my wife's day, to do the shopping and to just let the children play outside – that is, if it's not raining, which it is most of the time.

No missionary reported their stress level to be above seven.

Johnson and Penner's²¹ survey noted that the missionaries they studied, sought help to deal with the following problems, ranked by severity: 1) problems with other missionaries; 2) cultural adjustment; 3) managing stress; 4) raising children. Other lower ranked problems were marriage difficulties, financial pressures, and loneliness. Gish²² identified the following stressors that affected missionaries regardless of age, sex, or marital status: 1) confronting others; 2) communicating across language and culture barriers; 3) time and effort needed to maintain donor relationships; 4) managing the amount of work, and 5) establishing work priorities. Another study of missionary stress

²¹ Johnson, C. and Penner, D. *The Current Status of the Provision of Psychological Services in Missionary Agencies in North America*. Bulletin of the Christian Association for Psychological Studies, 1981, 7 (4), pp. 25-27.

²² Gish, Dorothy. *Sources of Missionary Stress*. Journal of Psychology and Theology, 1983, 11, pp. 238-242.

noted that although missionaries face continual discouragement and frustration, which they took in stride, they reported their greatest spiritual struggles to be: 1) maintaining a successful devotional time; 2) experiencing spiritual victory, and 3) managing feelings of sexual lust.²³

In a recent article Rosik, Richards and Fannon²⁴ found that missionaries who utilized member (missionary) care services sought out pastoral care, family enrichment services and personal enrichment services. Only 12.7 percent sought out personal counseling, although a larger number stated that they might seek these services in the future. When asked which member care service missionaries would seek out in the future, were they available, over half stated they would seek out pastoral care. Interesting is also the fact that many respondents found these services to be the most disappointing. It seems the deepest felt need of missionaries on the field is spiritual. Missionaries are looking for nourishment that will sustain them. They are also looking for someone who cares enough to listen. "Telling one's life story in a supportive environment has transformational power. Through telling their stories people see their whole lives, especially the work of God in them, from new perspectives."²⁵ Through missionary care missionaries find strength to keep on keeping on.

Maintaining strong marriages and families remains a high priority as well. Since attrition is often related to these two issues, special care should be taken to see that marriage enrichment and parenting seminars are made available to missionaries. Missionaries also stated that trauma debriefings were helpful; however, fewer women were included in trauma debriefings. It is the women, who though they may not have been part of a traumatic incident, may be in the most danger of experiencing secondary trauma. Rosik, et al. concluded that member care was highly valued by those who responded to their survey.

Missionaries differ from other expatriates in the following ways:²⁶

- The status of missionary families is not official in contrast with Dept. of Defenses, federal civilians, or business families.
- The missionary family is on the whole better prepared culturally for living in another culture.
- Missionaries go more out of desire (or intended design) than by assignment.
- There should be a finely-honed sense of mission. The MK is the product of parents who have a deep faith in God.
- Missionary families receive varying amounts of logistical support.
- Missionary families are dependent on the local economy.

²³ Parshall, Phil. *How Spiritual Are Missionaries?* Evangelical Missions Quarterly, 1990, 23, pp. 8-19.

²⁴ Rosik, Christopher, Richards, Alicia and Fannon, Ty Ann. *Member Care Experiences and Needs: Finding from a Study of East African Missionaries.* Journal of Psychology and Christianity, Spring 2005, 24, 1, pp. 38-45.

²⁵ Dodd, Lois and Dodd, Lawrence. *Intensive Care Community: Moving Beyond Surviving to Thriving* in Powell, John and Bowers, Joyce (Eds.), *Enhancing Missionary Vitality: Mental Health Professions Serving Global Missions.* Palmer Lake, Colorado: Missions Training International, 2002.

²⁶ List compiled from review of literature by Dr. Clyde Austin, Abilene, Texas, 1984

- Family income is the lowest of all overseas North Americans. The missionary family can neither afford, nor does he indulge in, noticeable consumption of material good.
- The missionary family is less concerned with and contributes less to the economy of the host country.
- The missionary family holds different values toward money and humanitarian service.
- Missionary families enjoy a greater degree of autonomy than their counterparts in the USA.
- Missionary families develop a higher level of tolerance for culture, linguistic, and political differences, hence, they are less rigid.
- The missionary family feels a greater sense of divided loyalty between the host country and home country than other USA expatriate families.
- Missionary families may have a better command of the local language than other expatriate USA families.
- Because of geographical isolation, there may be more social constriction.
- Educational opportunities may not always rival those of other sponsorship groups. More MKs may have to be sent away to boarding school than would be true of most USA families. The missionary family is more likely to send their children to a national school.
- The missionary family is often deeply involved with different segments of the modern third culture overseas. Missionary families are able to identify with a greater spectrum of socio-economic levels of society than other U.S. families.
- The missionary has been overseas longer than most American expatriate families.

Missionary parents often become bi-cultural. Many bi-cultural people adjust so well that they are able to switch easily, becoming adept at using whatever language or behavior is needed in whatever culture they find themselves.²⁷ Missionary children on the other hand become third culture kids (TCKs). They develop a sense of belonging to both the culture(s) of their parents and the culture in which they live, yet they seem to have no real ownership in either. They live in a blended cultural mix known as third culture.

TCKs/MKs have many positive experiences that will help them in their future lives. I have never met a MK who would trade places with their mono-cultural peers. Research studies show that MKs/TCKs tend to:²⁸

- Experience a more lasting adjustment if they are committed to the overall mission of their families.
- Think independently.
- Be non-conformists.

²⁷ Nancy Shewmaker spoke to the unique family needs of missionaries and Beth and John Reese addressed the topic of Raising Godly Third Culture Kids at the Global Missions Conference. Beth²⁷ has also written her master's thesis on strengths of Church of Christ missionary families. I recommend that you look at these resources.

²⁸ Schulz, Dorris. *A Study of Third Culture Experience in Relation to the Psycho-Social Adjustment of Returned Church of Christ Missionary Families*. University of Nebraska: Unpublished Manuscript, 1986.

- Choose occupations that will keep them in touch with their third culture experiences.
- Be more world minded (cross cultural enrichment).
- Be two years ahead of their American peers academically.
- Have increased tolerance for difference.
- Be group oriented and communally cohesive.
- Be more sensitive to outsider's needs (minority empathy)
- Have a 3-D view of the world (a clear awareness of what is going on in the world and what it is like for them).
- Be very human-service oriented

Van Reken and Pollock²⁹ describe benefits faced by Third Culture Kids as double-edged swords (challenges). An expanded world view tends to keep TCKs/MKs confused about their loyalties - there is more than one way to look at philosophical and political issues. A 3-D view of the world comes with a painful view of reality. They know that behind the scenes they read about in newspapers or view on the local news, there are real, flesh and blood people, who are affected by political/military decisions. TCK/MK world mindedness and cultural enrichment (knowing a lot about a lot of cultures and speaking other languages) is accompanied by ignorance about their "home culture." Many MKs are ignorant about local and even their own family history. U. S. humor may be hard to understand, and slang is constantly changing, making parts of the language almost like a foreign language to the MK.

Post-Field

Reentry adjustment is far more difficult than original adjustment to the mission field. A missionary, who feels called of God to tell others about Jesus, and whose family is happy in their chosen home, tends to make a good missionary. Living day in and day out in another country requires tolerance, flexibility, and open-mindedness. The missionary family learns to live with the attitude of Jesus toward humankind. They become all things to all men that they might save some (I. Cor. 9:22; 10:33). However, the more comfortable the family is in the host culture, the more difficulties they may encounter upon their return to their home culture.

Dr. Clyde Austin³⁰, now with Jesus, was an expert in third culture and reentry, made the following recommendations:

- Begin preparation at least six to twelve months in advance.
- Review reentry materials as a family.
- Develop a tentative USA family budget.
- Consider and/or discuss difficulties you might encounter in the areas of verbal and non-verbal behavior.
- Read home culture magazines, journals, or newspapers. Talk to recent on-the-field arrivals about current events. Ask for a "refresher course" on slang.
- Bring back special belongings of children.

²⁹ Pollock, David C. and Ruth E. Van Reken. *The Third Culture Kid Experience: Growing Up among Worlds*. Intercultural Press: Yarmouth, ME

³⁰ Austin, Clyde. *Cross-Cultural Re-entry: A Book of Readings*. Abilene, TX: Abilene Christian University: 1986.

- As much as possible, prepare young people for the world of employment.
- As much as possible, allow time for a gradual "decompression period" on the homeward trip in order to relax and mentally prepare for reentry.

Austin also suggested that after missionaries have returned home, they should:

- Be aware that they may experience depression, loneliness, fatigue, and illness as symptoms of stress. Grief is part of the normal process of adjustment.
- Be alert to their own expectations and the expectations of others. Value conflicts are inevitable.
- Be open to new discovery of self. Seek hobbies and community/church activities that fit new interests.
- Reevaluate parenting procedures and talk with other parents.
- Remember that reintegration will take time. Be resilient and keep a positive outlook.

I would further recommend that missionary families:

- Consider returning home before children go to middle school or junior high or wait until they are ready for college. Adolescent years are difficult years to move even in the United States. The problem is compounded by cultural stress and adjustment.
- Say goodbye to everything meaningful to you in the host culture. Visit your favorite places and say "good-bye." Take pictures and talk about not seeing this place or that person again. Every person important to the family should be contacted. There should be no unfinished business or loose ends not tied up before departure.
- Say hello. Make coming to America a game. Play the game of discovery. Take plenty of time before rushing into your new work. Enjoy your family and your friends and your home congregation. Each evening visit with your children about what they have "spied out" today.
- Maintain a sense of humor. It will save many a day and keep you healthy.
- Accept that the family will not be together as much as it was on the field. Talk to American parents about expectations. Find a mentor.
- Be careful about equating loneliness with spirituality.
- Get physical and dental check-ups.
- Visit with a financial counselor.
- Attend with your children a reentry debriefing.³¹
- Prepare your story. Just as it is difficult for a war veteran to explain what it is like to be in a battle to a civilian, so it will be difficult to explain what your mission was like to the home-bound Christian. You may need to prepare a two-minute story as well as stories for five-minutes, fifteen minutes and thirty minutes.
- Rejoice in being different. Like Abraham "look for the city not made with hands."

³¹ Available at Mission Resource Network.

What helped the family adjust initially to culture shock will help the family successfully traverse reentry shock, i.e.:

- Family adaptability
- Family integration
- Affectional relations among family members
- Good marital adjustment between husband and wife
- Companionable parent-child relationships
- Authoritative family structure

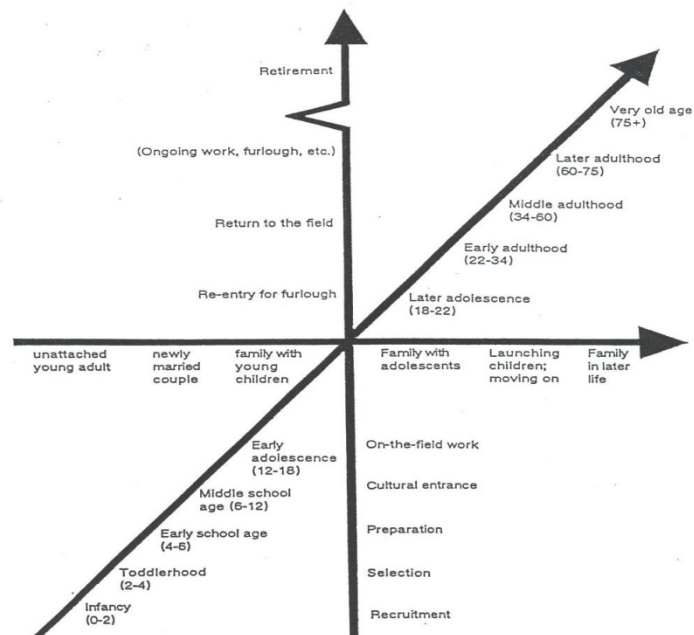
Mission Resource Network offers workshops for churches to help them better support their missionaries upon return, as well as a seminar for returning missionaries.

Some of the hardest things for returning missionaries to deal with upon return are materialism, feeling less spiritual – which is related to lack of connection upon return, and adjusting to the American church. Church and the team were community on the field. That kind of intimate connection is hard to find at home. Missionaries also have difficulties because family life in the U.S. is less satisfying. Children and parents often form a “we/us vs. them” mentality on the field. Missionary Kids often name their parents as their “best friends.” The amount of time children spend in other activities away from home in the states is hard to deal with. To missionaries it looks like Americans raise their children in an automobile. Concerning TCKs/MKs, who have spent their developmental years in a host culture, it must be said that “they never adjust; they learn to cope.”³² They live among worlds and many become trans-national cosmopolites.³³

³² Useem, Ruth Hill (Personal Communication, 1981).

³³ Schiatti, Barbara F. *Global Nomad Identity: Hypothesizing a Developmental Model*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Union Institute, 2001. (UMI Microform 9992721, Ann Arbor, Michigan: Bell and Howell Information and Learning Company, 2001.)

INTERCULTURAL FAMILY LIFE CYCLE



O'Donnell, K.S. (1987). Developmental tasks in the life cycle of mission families. *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, 15 (4), 282.

Member care is needed throughout the life cycle.

Perceived needs are different at different stages of the life cycle. Young families would appreciate more family-oriented help while older missionaries might appreciate retirement planning help. Single missionaries also need to have their developmental needs met.

Lately, I have observed that many of the mental health and missions conferences have offered workshops on internet pornography. This is a growing problem among Christians in the United States³⁴ and missionaries are not immune to such difficulties, noting that sexual purity was a problem missionaries stated they struggled with.³⁵ Prevention is easier than intervention and this should be addressed pre-field as well as on the field.

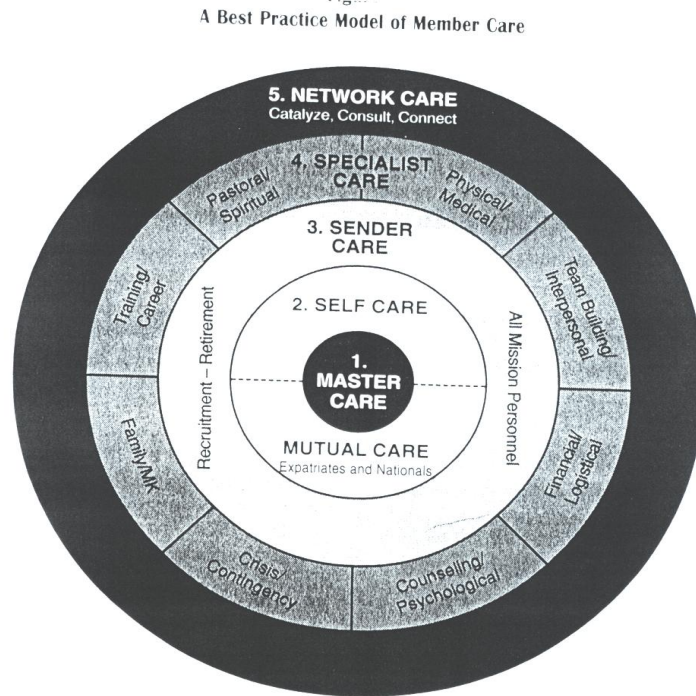
On-going cross-cultural stress and normative developmental stress are stresses missionaries can learn to cope with. With enough resources and support most stresses can be weathered. Missionaries consider them normal. It is the incident that is untimely, unpredictable, not considered normal, unanticipated, and traumatic that can become an almost unbearable strain.^{36 37}

³⁴ See <http://www.prodigalsonline.org/> and <http://www.family.org/married/topics/a0025117.cfm>

³⁵ See http://www.missionarycare.com/brochures/ss_internetimmorality.htm

³⁶ See McCubbin, Hamilton and Figley, Charles (Eds.) *Stress and the Family: Coping with Normative Transitions*, Volume I and *Stress and the Family: Coping with Catastrophe*, Volume II. New York: Brunner/Mazell, 1983.

³⁷ Charles Lindsey addressed this topic at the Global Missions Conference.



O'Donnell and Pollock's 'best practices model' "consists of five permeable spheres which are able to flow into and influence each other." Foundational in the center is Master care. It is the most important part of missionary care. The missionary must constantly look to the Master for sustenance. Practically this involves study, prayer, practicing spiritual disciplines, and worship with the community of believers and serving others.

Sphere two is Self and Mutual Care. To avoid burn-out missionaries need to learn to take care of themselves and to do that they have to be aware of what is happening within themselves. This takes a certain level of maturity. Mutual care is also essential. If we are to evangelize this world, it will spring from such worship. I consider sphere one and two care absolutely essential pre-field, on-the-field and upon return.³⁹

³⁸ Kelly O'Donnell and Dave Pollock, 2000 in O'Donnell, Kelly, *A Member Care Model for Best Practice*, O'Donnell, Kelley (Ed.) *Doing Member Care Well*. Pasadena, California: William Carey Library, 2002.

³⁹ I have a personal belief about mutual care. I believe that teams who learn to be community to each other, who become transparent and confessional before leaving for the field, will have less difficulty with conflict and stress on the field. I believe this kind of community can only happen when teams learn not just how to study God's word together, but learn how to listen to (hear) God's word together and who pray openly and transparently with each other. Those teams who go to the field who have learned to be community to each other place that same DNA into the church plant.

Sphere three is Sender Care. This includes everything I have already talked about thus far (pre-field, on-the-field and re-entry and post-field).⁴⁰ The goal of sender care is not just care, but empowerment. Missionaries need preventive care, developmental care, supportive and restorative care.

Sphere four is Specialist Care. Churches need to see that their missionaries get the proper medical care, dental care, mission training, team building training, financial help, tax help, insurance,⁴¹ retirement funds, debriefing, including reentry and crisis debriefing, and counseling/psychotherapy. They may need help with finding the right options for their children's education. One of the greater needs is spiritual. Missionaries need retreats where they can delve into scripture in a deeper way. They need spiritual people who will act as mentors, who can really hear the missionary and who will pray with them.

Network Care is Sphere five. There are very few Christian missionary care specialists on the field missionaries can turn to for help. This is something that will grow. At the moment we have a few missionaries who have prepared themselves to meet special missionary care needs. Missionary couples trained in counseling are in Singapore, East Africa and South America and a widowed missionary in Germany offer missionary care support to other missionaries. MRN supports some missionary care clinics financially around the world, so that should one of our missionaries need help, they could visit or ask for help from one of these clinics.⁴²

The Local Church

The local church is and should be the primary care giver to the missionary. Colleges are doing a wonderful job of teaching scripture through credit Bible courses, teaching missions principles, recruiting teams, encouraging, and mentoring teams in spiritual formation, etc., but it is the local church that sends. It is the local church that supports and sustains mission efforts. Missionaries report to the local church. It is to the local church they return. The local church has a great responsibility in care giving.

If missionaries remain effective and healthy in every stage of the missionary career cycle, it will be because the local church is practicing the two Greatest Commandments while carrying out the Great Commission. "The *Great Commandment* and the *Great Commission* are inseparable. The first cannot be carried without the second."⁴³ The early church fulfilled the Great Commission by keeping the Great Commandments and the Lord added to their number daily.

At the bottom of the *majority* of problems people face today is a *lack of connection*.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ These issues are discussed in several of the presentations from Track 12 of the 2005 Global Missions Conference, coordinated by Mission Resource Network.

⁴¹ See Hal Adams presentation from the 2005 Global Missions Conference

⁴² Contact Mission Resource Network for more information.

⁴³ Pollock, David, *Developing a Flow of Care and Caregivers*. O'Donnell, Kelly, (Ed.) Doing Member Care Well. Pasadena, California: William Carey Library, 2002.

⁴⁴ Larry Crabb, (personal communication during School of Spiritual Direction, Colorado Springs, Colorado, October 3-10, 2004.)

Think of any problem. At its base there is usually a loss of connection with another human being or with God. Community was designed by God. Where there is a caring community, you will find people who are connected.

Missionary care is complicated, but it is also simple. It must take place in community. Missionaries come to the church for financial support. The church gives financial support. It is important that the future missionaries get to know the church better. These young missionaries are wonderful people and have much to offer. They come with university training or its equivalent. They may be going through some cross-cultural training or some team building training and the church may think it has little to offer. The church has everything to offer. These students may know scripture, they may know how to preach and teach, but do they know how to listen to scripture, to listen to God?

The word "listen" can be found a lot more times in the Bible than the word for study. Do they have a relationship with Jesus Christ? Do they feel called to the task of missions for the right reasons? Do they know how to pray? Do they have a devotional life? If they are married, do they know how to deal with marital difficulties? If they are parents, do they know how to parent? These young missionaries need mentors and the church needs to be intentional in mentoring these young people. Let the men and women who have a close relationship with God mentor these young people in prayer and devotional life. Let those with good marriages befriend these young people and tell them about their good and hard times and how they made it through them. Let parents of older children mentor young parents in how to love and discipline their children.

Every member can get involved in befriending these young people. Get close to these young missionaries and when they go to the field, email often. Call regularly. Get so close to these young people that they will feel okay about calling or emailing you if there's a problem with one of the children or they are feeling down or culture shock is getting difficult. Plan to visit these young missionaries (not all at the same time) on the field. Think about what they need. As the missionaries age, the church can continue supporting them in new ways. When they send their children to the states to college, church member's homes become the MKs homes. Members become grandmothers, grandfathers, aunts and uncles and siblings to them. The church is family to their missionaries. Connections are strengthened. Community is a reality.

I think God, our Father, and his son, Jesus, become angriest when his sheep are uncared for. In Ezekiel 34, God is upset at the shepherds of Israel because they only take care of themselves instead of the flock, they do not strengthen the weak, heal the sick or bind up the wounded. They do not search for the lost sheep or find the strays. Because the shepherds are harsh the sheep are scattered. I think the church needs to shepherd its missionaries by doing the opposite of what the shepherds of Israel did. Missionaries are ordinary human beings who have taken on the extraordinary task of evangelizing God's creation in another culture. Think of all the ways missionaries can be strengthened. What kind of food does the church offer them? When they are wounded, how can the church bind them up? If they begin to lose their way, how does the church seek them out and care for them? How can churches avoid harshness with

their missionaries? How can they build community and be community for their missionaries? When churches answer these questions, missionary care will happen.

Missionary care is first of all an attitude. It is pastoral care. It is taking care of God's sheep. It is taking care of God's human resources. Member care takes place in every phase of the missionary career cycle and during each stage of the human life cycle. Missionary care is intentional and planned. It begins with Master Care and it is best carried out by the church. The church is the arms and legs and hands and feet of Jesus to do his work. It is the body of Christ. At times specialists may be called on by the church to help out,⁴⁵ but primarily, it is the church where care is done best – in community.

Universal Performance Assessment

Performance Questionnaire

- Are you satisfied with the employee's work?
- How well does the worker complete tasks?
- Does the employee satisfy your performance standards?

The employee:

- Works independently
- Works at job consistently
- Works at expected rate
- Completes acceptable work
- Carries out instructions
- Provides timely information about absence, tardiness, or desired time off
- Provides job-related information to other employees
- Does not disrupt or interrupt others
- Seeks clarification for instructions
- Gets necessary information
- Arrives at work on time
- Anticipates what needs to be done next
- Offers help to co-workers
- Responds appropriately to criticism

⁴⁵ For resources see mrnet.org.

- Expresses appreciation to co-workers
- Conversation does not interfere with work
- Apologizes as necessary
- Acknowledges what others are saying
- Uses social amenities