

How to Become a Missionary

Dr. Glover Shipp
Dr. Bob Waldron

In many nations, especially in Latin America, a family's oldest son traditionally inherits most of the family's property and business. The second son may then be a doctor or an attorney. The third son is encouraged to become a priest. In God's family, however, all human beings are expected to become priests in His kingdom. In addition, among these priests, God gifts some to be evangelists, either on the domestic scene or in a foreign setting. No one becomes a local evangelist or a missionary accidentally. Inborn talents and God-directed gifts have a bearing on this noble course. Even more important are influences that bear on our lives and a call or compelling urge to follow the mission pathway marked out by Christ and His apostles. Specifically, then, how can you become God's emissary in fields where His Son is little known or perhaps entirely unknown?

Begin with the Word

- Get to know Christ and His Word. Be serious about your study, understanding that God's Word is aimed at you personally, rather than being merely a history or a set of good principles.
- Prepare diligently in the Word. Be more than a casual reader; become a serious researcher of the Scriptures, ready for the day when the Lord will use you in His frontline battles.
- Grow to the point spiritually where you see that the message of God, from Genesis to Revelation, centers on the redemption of mankind.

Develop a Burden for the Lost

- Begin at home to encourage and teach others to become Christians. Realize with passion how many humans need redemption and how much it cost God and Jesus to offer salvation to a lost humanity.
- Mobilize others to join with you in a small evangelistic task force, right in your own community.
- Research your own city and region, to locate class and ethnic levels, as well as potentially receptive pockets of society.
- Gain experience, if possible, in conducting small group evangelistic Bible studies, and in planting and working with a new congregation.
- Look to the world's lost and pray for them. Patrick Johnstone's book, *Operation World*, will help you greatly in understanding the spiritual needs of all peoples and how to pray for them.

Come to a Sense of Personal Calling or Responsibility for the Mission of the Church Worldwide.

- Become a World Christian, with knowledge of and concern for as many peoples as possible.
- Visit other fields. This can be done as a tourist, student or campaigner. Nothing can replace firsthand exposure to other nations and their spiritual and material situations to help you accept the call of God for the lost peoples of the world.
- Sign up as a short-term summer or semester-long intern on some field. There are also various opportunities to serve for two years as an apprentice working under the guidance of a seasoned missionary.
- Make a firm commitment to go, on God's agenda, when and where He wants you to go. Ask Him to help you get rid of attitudes which inhibit your serving Him. Yield your life to Him.

Prepare Diligently for Your Mission.

- Pray for guidance to the field where the Lord may want you to go.
- Once led to a decision about a field, join others of like commitment, prayerfully and carefully forming a team to work there.
- Study the country, people group, tribe, city, language, and culture in question.

- Learn mission history and strategies, as well as other material that will equip you for more effective service on the field. Such studies are available at various Christian schools and universities.
- Boldly ask the Lord and His servants for spiritual and financial support. If your going is by the Lord's choice and blessing, it is not your project, but His. You are His spokesperson to another land and it should be considered a privilege on the part of churches and individuals to be partners with you in the endeavor.
- Reduce your possessions and financial commitments. Strive for a simplified lifestyle that calls for less "baggage" to take with you to the field.

Pack Your Bags and Go.

- Go on God's schedule and by His grace, where and when He chooses.
- Plan to remain at the task as long as He determines, not as long as you may wish. Long-term commitments of 10-15 years are needed for effective church planting.
- Keep in tune with His Word and will for your life on the field.
- Dream big for your field and then pray and work to reach your goals. Remember that goals are really dreams with a deadline.

Missions is a mindset, as much as a geographical location. Since all Christians should be involved in the Lord's mission, be Christ's missionary today, where you are. If you are faithful to His calling in your own small field, He may lead you eventually to even greater opportunities.

In this way, you can become a messenger for your Lord in some location where Christ is little known. It is no easy road to follow, but there may be no nobler calling. It is dangerous and rewarding but it is the course followed by Christ and His apostles.