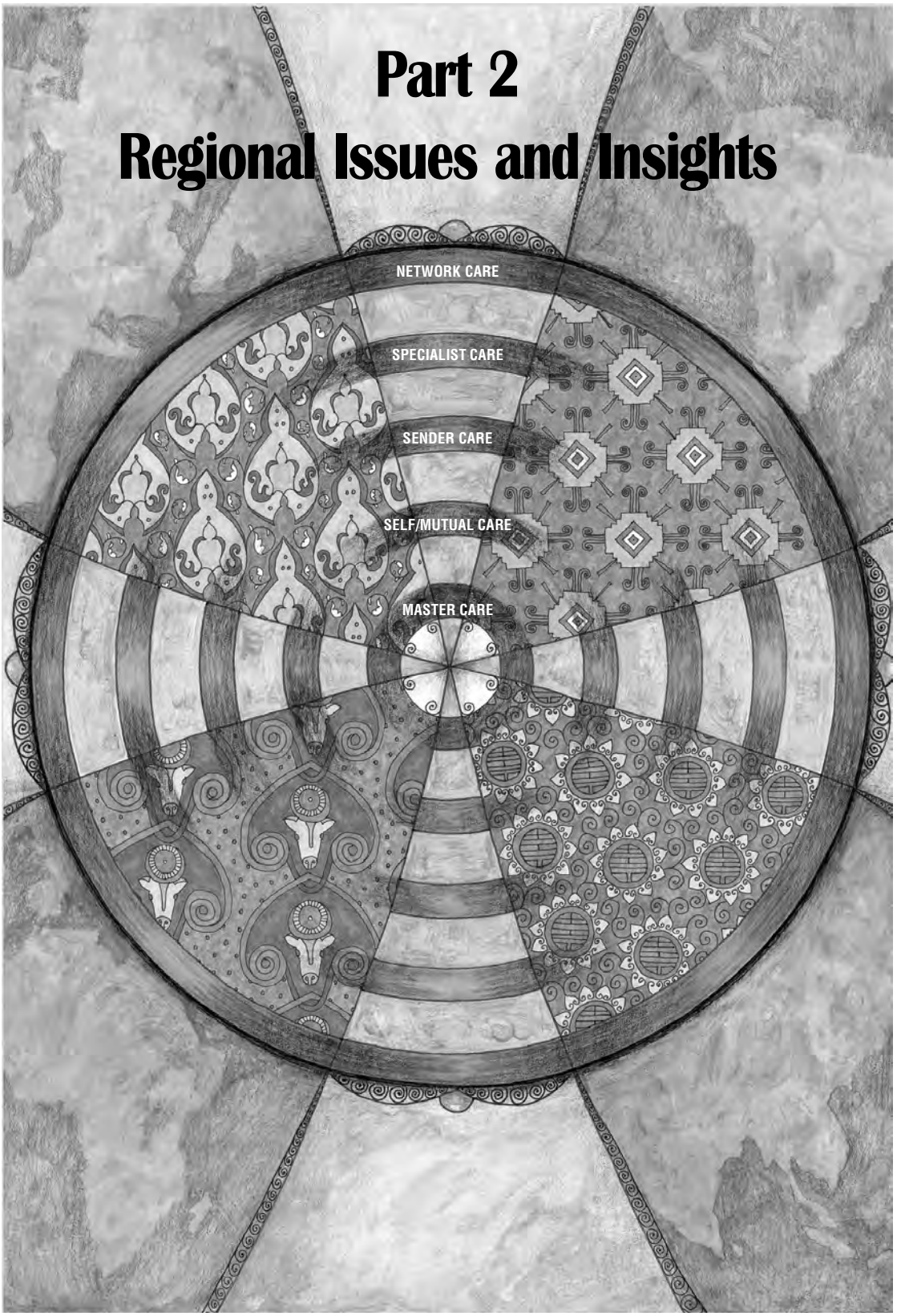
Part 2
Regional Issues and Insights



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Challenges and Care For Asian Missionaries

GRACIA WIARDA

This chapter focuses on some of the common issues facing Asian missionaries when they are on the field and on home assignment. These issues can differ in some measure from those confronted by Western missionaries. It is my hope that the various areas addressed in this article will lead to more action on the part of mission agencies and churches, as they seek to provide appropriate member care for Asian mission personnel.

It is my privilege to be in touch with many Asian missionaries through my work as a therapist at the Counselling and Care Centre in Singapore. Several mission agencies and churches in Singapore refer their candidates and missionaries to me for assessments, counselling, and debriefing. My perceptions are therefore based on feedback from a relatively broad base of missionaries working in different Third World countries. The people I work with tend to be in their late 30s to mid-50s. The issues they face may be peculiar to their generation. They are primarily Singaporeans but also include Taiwanese, Japanese, Nepalese, Koreans, Indonesians, Hong Kong Chinese, and Chinese Malaysians. The majority of them are first-generation Christians.

Field-Side Issues

Concern for the Family

Respecting and understanding the Asian culture will involve an appreciation of the strong sense of filial piety and family loyalty—an obligation to meet parental and familial needs and wants—in the Asian psyche. There is generally a lesser sense of entitlement, but rather a keen awareness of the need to repay relational debts. However, this trait may lessen as the socio-economic and cultural background changes with the onslaught of globalization and technological advances and as the emotional hold of family life breaks down. Many Chinese Asian missionaries continue to give their parents a monthly allowance while they are away. It represents a token of their gratitude for their parents' care and provision for them when they were young. Most parents expect this token even if they may not openly ask for it. It reflects well on the family when adult

children express their gratitude in monetary terms, as well as in frequent home visits and practical caregiving. Thus, the attempts of mission personnel to visit or contact parents and relatives on behalf of the missionary mean a great deal to both missionaries and their family members. Often Christian friends and church members act as proxies in the discharge of filial duty by visiting (particularly during important festivals and events) and making phone calls to the parents.

The idea of an adult child going away to serve other people instead of staying back to take care of parents is still unacceptable to some Asian parents. If the adult child goes away for money-making purposes, advancement of career, or because of a lack of other work choices, it may be deemed prudent or necessary. In the case of missionaries, there may be a mutual understanding between them and the family that they should compensate in the form of financial contributions or return when the parents (for health or other reasons) need their service. The exception may be for those who have sufficiently well-to-do siblings who support their overseas ministry.

Language Learning

There is a general consensus that Asians find learning another Asian language easier than their Western counterparts. Most have already been exposed to more than one language or dialect from a young age. Some of them have gone straight into field ministry without needing a language-learning program—for instance, a Singaporean Mandarin speaking Chinese going to Taiwan or China. Some breeze through a language program, while others plod along perseveringly. One missionary experienced undue stress when there was an inner expectation to master another Asian language faster because of his Asian background. A few mentioned feeling rather embarrassed when making language blunders and causing misunderstanding, being themselves sensitive to the Asian tendency of not asking for clarification or correcting someone's mistakes. This Asian "politeness" is adopted so as to avoid causing the other person to "lose face" (experience shame). Nevertheless, Asian missionaries feel embarrassed when they fumble, knowing that blunders are noted even though they are not addressed.

Those who have grown up in countries where they had little exposure to English find themselves needing to learn the English language in order to become members of international missionary organizations. Many missionary candidates from Korea, Japan, Hong Kong, and Indonesia are sent for English language courses so that they can take courses in cross-cultural studies or participate in the orientation programs of their organizations. For them, the period of preparation for service is lengthened by at least a year. Many Asians already speak fluent English and have graduated from colleges and seminaries overseas. Those who had learned the language only for communication within their missions often find themselves at a disadvantage. Particularly during their first term, when bonding and mutual understanding with their international colleagues are quite critical, they usually do not have sufficient mastery of the language to help negotiate all the nuances inherent in cross-cultural communication. Apart from learning and working at mastering the national language, they need to continue learning and improving in English. Otherwise, they will not be able to benefit as much from mission conferences and seminars and will be unlikely to move into leadership positions, even though they may be very competent.

Adjusting to the New Culture

Many have expressed that, as Asians, they are able to bond more easily with nationals, whether in Africa or in Asia, because of their cultural affinity. Statements such as, "The nationals tend to open up to us and share more deeply with us than with Western missionaries," "The nationals treat us like family," and, "They confide in us and we can say things to

them," are made. One missionary to Africa believed that what bridges the gap is the high value placed on the family and the extended family that Asians and Africans tend to share. She felt that most Western missionaries found it very hard to appreciate and understand the invisible family loyalty bonds that influence individual behavior. Another missionary shared that she was told by an African national that she was "family," but the Western colleague was more like an employer.

In some cases, Asian missionaries feel triangulated because they identify with the nationals as Asians and with the Westerners as team members. A national may criticize a Western colleague and expect the Asian missionary to understand and take sides. Though rarely framed very explicitly, the negative aspects of what Westerners stand for are often alluded to in the criticism. A national might say, "You know the Westerners, they…," or comparisons might be made between "them" (the Westerners) and "us" (the Asians) in the context of how things are done. Asians may not be aware of their own racial prejudice coloring their views of Western colleagues or of identification with the sentiments of the nationals. However, Western colleagues are still teammates with similar goals and calling, and Asian missionaries sometimes find themselves caught between two loyalties. On the other hand, one Asian family felt second class because the nationals preferred to host a Western family, since that was more prestigious. Among Asians themselves, there is racism based on the degree of lightness of skin color, cultural heritage, economic status of the country of origin, and other factors.

A common perception is that Western missionaries tend to be treated with more deference and outward respect, but Asian missionaries know the nationals better. Several have remarked that they are able to pick up signals when things are amiss. They feel that they can better read the nonverbal and verbal cues, what was said and not said, what was hinted at and meant. One person said, "You just know. I can pick up when they are just being polite, when to stop pushing."

A Singaporean Chinese expressed that sometimes the similarity she shares with the Taiwanese Chinese in both features and spoken language becomes a disadvantage. Although fluent in Chinese, she was raised in a multi-cultural context and in an English-medium school. She felt that the Taiwanese expected her to be more "Chinese" in her outlook and were less forgiving when she made mistakes in the use of the language or in interpreting some cultural cues and customs. Although educated in English, she would probably never see herself as "Western" in orientation by any means.

Asian countries share many similar cultural and religious expressions, including the wearing of school uniforms, the practice of having several generations and units of the extended family living nearby or under one roof, open markets, the offering of incense, the presence of shrines in homes, the use of talismans, and the celebration of Buddhist festivals and rites. The buildings of major religions are common sights: ornate Hindu and Buddhist temples, mosques, and Catholic cathedrals. While there are significant differences between countries and while Asians do experience some measure of cultural shock, on the whole they may be exposed to less shock in terms of an overload of differences. It seems that the Asian missionary, once settled, tends to move faster in establishing relationships and ministry with the nationals. The adjustment struggles may be more related to areas of lifestyle, standard of living, and understanding the deeper nuances of the particular culture of the country.

Collegial Relationships

Asians, particularly those for whom English is a second or third language, have to work harder to communicate with colleagues. Those who cannot hold their own with fluent English may minimize social contacts with Western or other Asian colleagues. It is natural to seek out homoge-

neous groups for social and emotional support. Often Koreans will look for other Koreans and Singaporeans for other Singaporeans when seeking fellowship.

A general belief is that working as an international team is enriching and a good testimony to the gospel message, but it is often stressful. Western missionaries, while mentally prepared to work with the nationals, are often not oriented to the cultural background of their Asian colleagues. The Asian colleague, though similar in some ways to the nationals, is quite different in other ways. Sometimes Western colleagues may have difficulty understanding where the Asian colleague is coming from. There are stories aplenty about miscommunication between the two, primarily as a result of differences in use of the language and style of expressions. Asian colleagues, in particular perhaps the Koreans, tend to value the spiritual disciplines and hard work, and they arrive on the field with very high expectations concerning the spirituality of their Western colleagues. One Asian was nonplussed by what he perceived as lack of dedication and Christian love. Some have expressed disappointment at what seems to be a vestige of colonialism. When inconsistencies of treatment and preference are perceived, these are often not verbalized. Thus, perceptions are often not clarified because of the sensitivity of the issues and sometimes because of the language barrier. Over time, the accumulation of such perceptions, whether accurate or inaccurate, leads to distancing and disillusionment.

When Asian missionaries are asked why they do not request help from Western missionaries when it is needed or would be appreciated, the frequent answer is, "I don't want to impose." This sensitivity towards being an imposition seems quite prevalent. There is a strong belief that Western colleagues value their time and space very highly. When help is proffered, Asians may still be hesitant to accept until they are certain that no inconvenience will be caused. Unfortunately, this dance may not be familiar to Western colleagues, and the number of steps back and forth may vary considerably among Asians themselves. Some look for non-verbal cues, while others listen for repeated offers before accepting.

On the other hand, it is interesting to note that quite a number of Asian missionaries who have been on the field for more than one term mention that they have changed as a result of interacting with their Western colleagues. They believe that they are now more open in their style of communication. One revealed that, being Asian, she had tended to be reticent in sharing, but she had learned to be more self-disclosing towards the latter part of the first term. Another said she learned to speak up so as to be heard and get what she needed. She had initially expected to be looked after, but she found that she did not receive because she did not ask her team leader. Several shared that they had learned to be more assertive when dealing with their team members. However, they tend to moderate their approach and engage in socially understood but more indirect ways when dealing with Asians. It seems that they generally prefer to have help offered by Western colleagues rather than request help directly. Although they may have learned new behaviors, their preference may not have changed.

Some find the fellowship meetings difficult to cope with because of the speed at which English is spoken. The various accents of spoken English make listening hard work as well. Since Asians are still the minority in most international mission bodies, they continue to find that they have to accommodate more to the prevalent Western culture. A single lady mentioned that fellowship suppers often cater to Western palates. Another tried to be part of her international team by hosting her colleagues and cooking special Chinese meals. After the meals, however, she was left out of the table games and general conversation, where cultural references were made that only the majority group would understand. She ended up feeling

like a maid, serving food and doing the dishes while her colleagues sat around the table, played Scrabble, and chatted. She became very upset and felt discriminated against. She thought the others would try to come halfway to meet her social and inclusion needs. To cope with the situation, she stopped entertaining and distanced herself from others.

Children's Education and Welfare

Some Asian parents whose children go to boarding schools experience difficulty relating to their children as they grow older. This may be compounded by the fact that the culture of boarding schools tends to be more Western, and the longer the children are in boarding, the more fluent they become in English as compared to the mother tongue. This poses a greater problem for those parents who learned English only in order to be part of the mission organization. Unless they continue to make significant progress in English, they may find themselves becoming more distant from their children because of language problems. Unless the children are encouraged to read in their mother tongue when they are home on vacations, they may never be as fluent in it as needed.

Some parents try to get around this problem by serving in cities where there are international schools and where the children can stay at home with them. This is impossible for those working in isolated villages or other areas without such options. Most Asian school systems are such that home schooling is not a viable option. Even if possible, home schooling poses a greater challenge for children whose educational medium is an Asian language, as it would mean more isolation for them, as well as isolating the parent from the mission community. One Japanese family placed their children in the Indonesian school system while homeschooling them in Japanese and later moved to another field where there was a Japanese school when the children finished primary-level studies.

One parent expressed that his children tend to be more assertive, expressing their preferences and knowing their rights, than they would have been if they were raised in their home culture instead of a boarding school. One child was reported to have said, "You need to take my views into consideration as well." Some parents find the children more independent in their decision making than they are prepared for. Several families indicated that having siblings together at the boarding school helped them feel more assured. The parents expect the oldest child to keep an eye on the younger ones and to maintain the sense of family. Asian children are still in a minority in boarding schools, and parents may be more concerned about their acceptance and integration.

A ubiquitous parental concern is reintegration of older children into tertiary schools of the home country. There are two main fears: the children's potential struggle with cultural re-adaptation and their difficulty with the educational system. The situation is particularly difficult when the home country's educational system does not use English as a medium of instruction. This puts Asian families in a predicament if they ever desire to return home halfway through their children's schooling. Boarding schools are attempting to expose Asian MKs to their mother tongue, but not at the level of proficiency that is needed for re-entrance to a school back home. It may be very difficult for an Asian MK to enter an Asian non-English university.

Going outside Asia for higher education is an option, but it is more expensive for the Asian missionary family. Generally, an overseas education is a highly valued commodity for Asians, as it often means better educational input, status, and employment prospects for the graduate. It is unlikely that church members will be eager to fund missionary children abroad if they themselves can afford to send their own children only to local universities. Also, it is unlikely that young people will have relatives living overseas to help them

adjust there. If Asian MKs do go to university abroad, they may return to their own country and culture an additional three to four years later than the typical Western MK. It may be more difficult for Asian MKs to feel "Asian" when all their education, from kindergarten to college, is done away from the home country. The majority of their peers throughout their schooling life will not be from their own country of origin. It may be quite a task for these MKs to fit in when they return to their home countries as young adults.

Singapore presents a unique problem in its very structured, pressurized system, its two-language policy, and its requirement for a cash bond for males of 11 years and older who reside outside the country. Looking into educational and housing arrangements for middle school children needs to be high on the MK care agenda.

Leadership Styles and Opportunities

The two preferred leadership styles seem to be the benevolent authoritative and the consultative styles. Generally there is a strong loyalty towards and respect for the authority figure. It is often expected that the authority figure should have one's interests and welfare at heart. The Asian tends to avoid challenging a leader out of respect for both the person and the position held. Therefore, Asian workers struggle when they feel that they have been wrongfully treated or that partiality has been shown towards others. To deal with the issue directly may come across as challenging leadership, being self-seeking, or owning up to feelings of hurt. This may be considered too threatening and perhaps unspiritual. The affected individuals feel anger, disappointment, and guilt simultaneously. They may berate themselves for having negative feelings and for harboring inner complaints towards the leader. It becomes an emotional and spiritual crisis for some, and they often try to process their feelings internally. They may be more open to talking to someone outside the system or to another trusted colleague rather than leveling with the leader.

One person bemoaned, "How can I submit when he has made such an obviously wrong decision? But not to submit is not respecting authority." Another lady asked, "He is my leader. How can I feel this way and complain like the Israelites and not be sinning?" There is a tendency to have high expectations about the character of the leader as well, that the person be mature spiritually and emotionally. A high level of emotional control in public is expected, and if a person explodes in anger, it brings much shame and loss of face. There tends to be more willingness to forgive for incompetence than for perceived lack of patience, humility, integrity, or spiritual disciplines.

There has also been a shift among the Asians towards wanting a consultative leadership style. Some have felt hampered in their work because leaders had goals that did not take into consideration the gifting and individual goals of the missionary. Here the feeling expressed was that leaders did not trust them in the pursuit of their ministry focus. This is particularly true for those who have to work closely as a team. They feel that they have very little say in their own direction and job fit. Asians who are given free rein to develop in their ministry focus tend to express appreciation.

Team leadership opportunities within the field require a good command of English. Members from certain Asian countries are disadvantaged unless they have had the opportunity of tertiary education in English abroad and have gained fluency in the language, both spoken and written. Leadership roles also require that the person be able to communicate well with the usually larger group of Western colleagues. The homogeneity principle tends to motivate group behavior and so may work against the minority members in a mixed team. The reverse would be true if Asians dominate in numbers, and the leader chosen would then more likely be an Asian.

Pastoral Care on the Field

Most Asian missionaries value a strong connection with the home base and express a desire for pastoral care. They welcome official visits from the staff of the mission home office or from the pastor or members of their home church. Perhaps they feel that they can better share with other Asians, using their own language or slang, or perhaps they long periodically for a taste of home away from home. Little indicators that the missionary is being remembered—such as birthday cards, postcards, letters, the occasional phone call, or small packages—are valued, particularly by singles, who admit feeling lonely and isolated at times. Some share that they feel more able to process their feelings and thoughts with a pastoral person who is outside the "system." One missionary requested a pastor to visit her and act as her mediator to resolve some team issues, as she was the only Asian member and she felt that having another Asian would be a great support for her.

The proximity of and relatively cheap airfares to Asian countries allow for frequent mission trips organized by some Singaporean churches to expose their members to missions, as well as to visit their missionaries. These trips nurture vital contact between missionaries and their church during their years on the field, and they permit church members to share in the ministry. The latter are better able to pray for and promote continued interest in the work when they return.

Home-Side Issues

Reentry Stress

A Singaporean missionary couple once remarked, "The Singapore Dream is but a dream for us. We sometimes feel like paupers among princes. Singapore has become very comfortable and seemingly or really affluent. The difference in lifestyles between Singapore and what we are used to [on the field] is almost Grand Canyon-wide. Many of our friends have upgraded to bigger and better housing, own club memberships, and dine in fancy places. Coming back from the field, it has become increasingly difficult for us to conform and adjust to the present standard of living."

Exposure to the good life attained by some contemporaries often brings about mixed feelings. The contrast in financial standing and spending between these individuals and the missionary may be experienced as a rude shock. One of the Asian ways, in particular among the Chinese, of welcoming a person back from a long stay away is to take him/her out for fancy meals in fancy restaurants. A Singaporean missionary said that she ate her way back into the country and then out of the country. Also, the missionary may be heaped with special monetary gifts, taken to posh clubs, and even treated to short vacations. Since it is generally expected that missionaries are "poor" and have "sacrificed to serve overseas," Christian friends are quick to take the tab. While it is wonderful to experience abundance, some struggle with the disparity of the two worlds they straddle—perceived as poor in one and as rich in the other. Some struggle with the sense of being patronized; others, with the sense of being put on a pedestal. The question of one's identity apart from one's role as a missionary may trouble the sensitive soul.

Those who have been able to make more frequent visits to their home countries during their terms on other Asian fields may be less impacted by the rapid changes of technology and lifestyle. It seems that missionaries from the richer Asian countries are able to make more frequent and shorter home assignments as well as take vacations in their home countries. This is helped by the relatively cheaper airfares they have to pay compared to their Western colleagues returning home. While this may be an advantage, it challenges the expectation still held by the majority of Asian Christians that missionaries should be sacrificial and careful with money. Some missionaries feel compelled to explain their plans and actions

to ward off misunderstanding and jealousy. It is not uncommon to hear a missionary quickly respond, "This was given to me," or, "This was a hand-me-down dress from my lawyer friend," when complimented for having an expensive belonging or for wearing a beautiful dress.

Housing for Singles

Single missionaries are often expected to stay at the home of their parents or a sibling while on home assignment. However, there are several reasons why this may not be a good arrangement. Family members may find it difficult to understand the single's need for separateness and space.

Most Asian families (unless particularly well to do) do not leave the bedroom of the missionary empty during the person's term on the field. The room may have been rented out for economic reasons. One single lady had to sleep on a couch in the living room. What was more stressful was that her bedroom had been rented out to a male boarder. In other situations, the room may have been taken over by siblings or other members of the family, or, for practical reasons, it may have been converted into a study room. Single missionaries may feel less at home in their own home country than in an apartment on the field. It requires extra energy to readjust to sharing a room in crowded conditions, with disrupted family members feeling unhappy about the imposition. Sometimes the close proximity causes unresolved issues and conflicts to resurface. Several missionaries have highlighted how they feel more comfortable on the field. One heaved a sigh of relief as she neared the end of home assignment, saying, "I am glad to return to my country of service and rest up."

For some, there is the psychological stress of adjusting to living with parents, who may revert to treating the adult as a child. Asian parents often continue to expect child-like deference and respect when one is under their roof. Chinese parents use the phrase, "I have eaten more salt than you have rice," to silence any dissenting opinion. Singles, who have experienced living competently abroad, find this stressful. Since many Asians find it hard to apply conflict management principles when it comes to handling differences with their parents, they feel the tension all the more. It is also difficult to bring new rules or activities into established family life. For instance, the bedroom doors in some homes are seldom closed or locked, and family members enter at will. Having savored what it means to have boundaries respected, the missionary may now feel the "invasion" to be very intrusive. One missionary found that although all her siblings had married and moved out, the parental home remained like Grand Central Station. The parents were babysitting several of the grandchildren, and her siblings and their spouses would take their evening meal at the home before taking their children home. This provided an excellent setting to reconnect with the extended family, but it left the missionary feeling frazzled.

Even with understanding parents, there may still be stress. The missionary may want to contribute financially towards the household expenses. Among traditional Asian Chinese, it is often the cultural expression of a filial and gainfully employed adult to give a token sum to the parents, even more so if the person stays with them. However, this contribution may not have been factored into the missionary's home assignment stipend.

Increasingly in Singapore, single missionaries are advised to buy their own apartments, more to resolve a future retirement housing problem than for home assignment housing. This option is not always affordable, especially for Asian counterparts whose government does not provide subsidized public housing.

Housing for Families

Most Singaporean missionary families buy their own homes before they go overseas. However, their apartments are usually rented out so that the income can go

towards paying the mortgage. If a family wants to use the apartment, arrangements will have to be made to ensure that tenancy completion coincides with their return from the field. Thereafter, there will be further paperwork involved to get new tenants. Most Singapore families choose home assignment options that suit their older children's overseas school calendar; for those electing shorter but more frequent home assignments, this arrangement becomes impractical.

Those who have personal resources, either through well-endowed families or friends, will have their housing needs adequately met. Resources available within their home church can make a big difference. One family moved into the new and empty apartment of a church couple who were getting married later in the year. However, there are families who do not have access to a large support network and have to camp out with relatives.

Since to my knowledge none of the mission agencies in Asia keeps apartments for missionaries on home leave, appropriate and restful housing arrangements continue to present a challenge for most.

Parental Expectations and Needs

Asian families are likely to expect the missionary to do his/her part to fulfill family obligations while on home leave. Since the siblings and other relatives have been assuming the familial responsibilities and duties during the missionary's absence, the balance of relational fairness calls for the missionary to pull as much weight as possible while at home. One lady became solely responsible for taking her father to medical appointments and handling his physical care. Another cleared the financial morass created by another family member. Where there are tensions between family members, the missionary may be roped in to resolve the issues. Often a previous family role is reassumed, such as peacemaking, caregiving, or overfunctioning. Much time and energy are expended in these roles, and little is left for rest, self-care, and reconnecting with supporters and friends. Resultant feelings may include a sense of burden, guilt, fatigue, emotional drain, and being stretched at the end of home assignment.

It is common for older Asian parents to continue maintaining the hierarchical posture in relating to their adult children. They often continue to tell the adult what is good for him/her and what ought to be done, sometimes in seemingly offhand comments and sometimes very directly. Single missionaries are subtly and sometimes not so subtly pressured to get married. Marriage is seen as a means of ensuring security for the future. One lady in her 50s was still pressured to get a husband, any man, and settle down. On the other hand, since singles are supposedly less encumbered than their married siblings, they are often the ones "assigned" to care for aging and frail parents. Although traditional-minded parents generally prefer to be with their eldest son, many of them live with and are cared for by the single child. Some families tend not to see missions as a worthy enough profession to place before family obligations. The culture still defines filial piety as financially and physically supporting aged parents. Perhaps in a couple of decades this mindset will change, as young adults and parents are encouraged to do financial planning for their retirement.

There are those who are blessed with supportive and understanding family members who respect them and their calling and seek in all ways to facilitate the readjustment at home. Often these members are from richer backgrounds or have Christian siblings who have since moved up in life and are willing to support them or who are second-generation Christians.

Financial Considerations

Asian missionaries tend to be very careful about how they are perceived by others in their financial management and lifestyle. Most of them tend to be frugal and are often hesitant to ask directly for what they need. There is a reluctance to

talk about financial matters for fear of appearing unspiritual. (The Campus Crusade Asian missionaries may be different in their approach because of the culture of the mission.) When they do ask, it is often out of necessity. Missionaries are more likely to express their financial concerns only when directly approached. Some may feel financial pressure and not express it, but they would appreciate having the mission or church leadership check with them. Generally, they prefer being asked rather than to have to ask or inform leadership and others about the sensitive issue of money.

Some struggle with finances more when they are on home leave. The many social obligations to family and friends can make quite a dent in the monthly stipend. Monetary gifts to the bereaved at wakes, birthday gifts, wedding gifts, transport, and other miscellaneous costs add up. There is often an expected increase in contribution to the parents when staying with them. It cannot be assumed that parents or siblings, particularly those who are non-Christians and not too well off financially, will take care of the missionary's needs. One missionary reported that she was able to save money on the field but not while on home leave. Another reported that he was shocked at how much money he spent on social obligations and transport costs going to the various functions and church meetings.

Many reported, however, that they were amply supplied by monetary gifts slipped to them by friends and supporters. Many receive practical gifts like clothes, books, and toys. This may be one reason that church and mission leaders do not check on how missionaries are faring financially, as they expect them to be getting extra support from outside the official system. One missionary was not paid for three months because the church treasurer was too busy to sign the checks and did not think that the missionary would be financially strapped. Those who have not nurtured a good social support system before leaving for the field tend to be those who do not have as many supplementary gifts.

As far as I know, there are no retirement homes provided for Asian missionaries, and most Asian countries are not welfare states. Singaporean missionaries are encouraged to purchase government subsidized public housing for their retirement needs. Unless they have worked for some time before becoming a missionary or have helpful and well-to-do relatives, not all of them can afford the down payment. Other Asian missionaries may not have access to subsidized housing or the financial resources to purchase retirement housing. Some mission agencies provide guidance and help in developing retirement plans, while others leave missionaries to buy their own insurance policies or handle their own financial planning. One missionary jokingly responded, "Well, I hope I die quickly," when asked whether she had enough money put aside to live on after retirement.

Children's Schooling Needs

One unique problem of Asian parents is the reintegration of their children into schools in the home country. In most Asian countries, the medium of instruction in the schools is not English. The school system also tends to be more structured and intense and operates with a class size of about 40 pupils to a teacher. Having a child above kindergarten age fit easily into the system halfway through the school year is nearly impossible, unlike in the Western system. To enter a Singaporean school for just a year while the family is on home assignment requires herculean effort, incessant prayer, and the goodwill of many levels of officials in the Ministry of Education and the school. Unless the schooling issue is creatively handled, most Asian families with primary and secondary level school children will have to make short home assignment stays.

The solution of short but frequent home assignments may become a problem in the future. Short stays feel more like extended vacations. It is difficult to

experience one's culture when one is mostly observing but not intensely participating. A worrying thought is that Asian MKs may have even less of a sense of rootedness in their home country than Western MKs. When mother tongue usage is not developed at boarding school and the school culture is likely to be Western, children shift imperceptibly but surely towards Western frames of reference. Unlike their Western counterparts, however, Asian MKs do not return to the West but to an Asian country when their schooling is done. Most parents are delighted with the educational system of international schools, which tend to be less pressured than Asian schools. They feel that their children are getting a better education. They appreciate the care and spiritual guidance provided in mission-run boarding schools. Few are thinking of the adjustment issues that their children may experience when their entire school and dorm life is within a Western orientation. There are now attempts to recruit Asian teachers to teach Korean and Chinese students in some boarding schools and to set up a dormitory catering to Asian MKs. However, there are still teething problems.

Home Church Expectations

It appears that many Asian churches are still expecting their missionaries to fit right back into church ministry while on long home assignment, such as administrative work at the church office or extensive pastoral or teaching duties. This is particularly true when the church is a fully supporting one, a smaller congregation, or a non-English-speaking one. Members may ask awkward questions like, "How is it that you are doing nothing?" and, "Why don't you…?" to a missionary who took home leave to reintegrate the children into the local schools. Some pastors may look forward to having the missionary on home assignment share their heavy work load, but they frame it as, "I want to give you opportunities to reacquaint yourself with the members." While some missionaries may have the energy to take on ministry duties, others arrive home already exhausted from long periods of learning and serving in a different language and culture. They may return to the field not feeling adequately rested and revitalized, and some actually return more tired and drained than when they left. A couple who were able to take a vacation just before resuming their field duties reported that it helped them recoup enough to start the new term without feeling depressed.

It seems that Asians do less deputation work, on the whole, than their Western counterparts. They are more likely to take on ministry duties and to attend as many of the regular meetings of their supporting churches as possible. In Singapore, it is common to have one church, the home church, providing fully for a missionary's support. Because the support sum can be quite substantial, the church members may expect more from their missionaries in terms of ministry results or service when they are on home leave. In some international mission organizations, missionary families may have to raise a monthly support figure amounting to more than what most of their church members earn monthly. This is due to the high cost of living in some Asian countries, and included in the support package are the mission's administration costs, children's overseas educational expenses, transport allowances to and from the field, medical and retirement funds, and other items. There is generally a willingness to support the individual who is leaving a high-paying job to go into missions or who has good qualifications that would command a good salary in the secular world. In such cases, the high support amount that has to be raised by the home church is still less than the real or potential earning power of the missionary, and the missionary is perceived as making the greater sacrifice. However, if a missionary is getting more financial support than would be gained from a job or from professional training, more seems to be demanded from the individual to merit the financial investment of the church.

Some Recommendations for Asian Member Care

Field-Side Issues

Pastoral care and help for the family

Mission agencies and churches may want to give serious consideration to the importance of providing pastoral care to the parents of missionaries as part of their commitment and support of each missionary. Visiting the parents during festivals, calling on them to inquire about their welfare, treating them to special dinners or events, and praying for them when they are ill are small gestures that mean a lot culturally. These things create positive feelings towards the church and predispose non-Christian parents towards Christ. The financial support raised by missionaries may need to include an amount that goes towards parents, who expect such a contribution from their adult children. Missionaries cannot say "Corban" like the Pharisees and expect to avoid supporting their parents. One agency hosted a special Chinese New Year dinner to honor the parents and gave them the traditional gifts of oranges and "red packets" on behalf of their missionaries on the field.

Flexible language program

Tailoring language programs according to factors such as aptitude, learning style, number of languages spoken and written, and similarity of the new language to the individual's mother tongue (for instance, Japanese writing and Chinese writing are quite similar) is a step towards acknowledging the advantages some Asians possess language-wise. Structured programs developed with the Western learner in mind may require adaptation to fit the peculiarities of the Asian learner.

Bonding with the mission team

It is important for Asians to experience bonding with the mission agency through the team members on the field. Even those who already speak the national or local language when they first arrive on the field need to be oriented and helped in the transition. Perhaps assigning a "big brother" or "big sister" from the team would be helpful for those who do not go through the usual language and orientation program. It cannot be assumed that knowledge of a language is equivalent to knowledge and understanding of the culture and way of life. The national believers, if there are any in that field, will probably be the best informers and helpers for the new missionary. However, the mission is supposed to be the "family," and it is important that the initial caregiving comes from the team. This will contribute to more cohesiveness between the Asian and Western missionaries.

Team building

Working with an international team will demand extra sensitivity on the part of the majority group to the needs of the minority group. It may require greater attentiveness to including the one who is most different from the group, helping those who struggle with English, and avoiding any semblance of unfair treatment.

Efforts need to be made to challenge racial stereotypes, enhance the personal growth of missionaries within the international team, and strengthen personal and corporate identity. Having lectures or presentations on the general differences between various nationalities is educational and informative, but it is insufficient for promoting mutual understanding and acceptance. Reflective and experiential group exercises that increase awareness of the latent or unconscious racial beliefs that missionaries may have imbibed from their cultural background are necessary as the first step to change. These beliefs can then be challenged and discarded. Building a cohesive team of culturally sensitive and mature individuals will go a long way toward reducing attrition from interpersonal conflicts on the field.

Boarding school for older children

Asian parents may want to seriously consider and try other options of schooling to keep their children with them until they are at least in their teens before sending them away to boarding school. This will give the children more time not only to bond with the family but also to embrace cultural values from the parents. However, this may not be possible, as there may not be any international schools nearby, some local schools are just not suitable, and home schooling does not work for every family. Mission agencies and Asian missionary families must take equal responsibility in providing for their MKs an environment that encourages and maintains some measure of their own national identity. Eating with chopsticks (for the Chinese, Japanese, or Koreans) or eating with fingers (for the Indians) once a week at the cafeteria in the boarding school is really not good enough.

Home-Side Issues

Home assignment coordinator

It may be helpful to appoint a home assignment coordinator. This person acts as a resource and pastoral person and actively looks into the various needs of the missionary during the home assignment period. Duties may include:

- Debriefing and counseling or referring for professional counseling as needed.
- Looking into orientation for reentry, housing, and cultural induction programs for the children.
- Researching schooling possibilities for children who are on a year-long home assignment.
- Planning with the missionary a personalized plan for rest and relaxation, self and relational growth programs, programs for upgrading skills, spiritual retreats, and deputation meetings.
- Collaborating with the missionary and the supporting churches regarding the kind and extent of church involvement during home assignment.
- Monitoring the missionary throughout the home assignment to ensure that the purpose and personalized plan for home assignment are accomplished.
- Supplying updates on trends in the church and society, immigration, education, and other national policies.
- Educating Asian church leaders and members as to the purposes of the home assignment.
- Processing the home assignment experience before the missionary returns to the field.

There is a special advantage to having a coordinator shared by several mission agencies or churches. Such a person knows when there are large enough numbers of missionaries back on home assignment at any one time so special growth groups, MK meetings, or marital enrichment seminars can be held.

Housing coordinator

There are several ways to resolve housing needs of singles and families for up to one year in length. The most effective is to build and maintain a broad network with the Christian community so that resources, whether financial or housing, can be tapped when needed. There are many Asian Christians who are generous and desirous of sharing their resources for the use of God's ministers. There are many churches in Asian cities that have members in the educated and well-to-do classes, and they are often very willing to offer their furnished, empty apartments/houses free or at minimal rent for short-term stays. What may be needed is a person who is respected and known in the community to take on the administrative task of coordination and management of needs and resources and to see this service as a vital contribution to member care.

Flexible arrangements for home assignments

Missionaries serving in nearby fields may wish to consider frequent and shorter home assignments and even vacations in their home country. This reduces major

disruption for the children in their schooling and increases the satisfaction of extended family members to have more frequent contact. However, missionaries may also want to take into consideration the sensibilities of their compatriots, who may view this solution as an easy life with more holidays than workdays. One church member commented enviously, "Only the missionary can travel as much as the rich and famous." Several factors will need to be weighed carefully in this matter, including the degree of hardship on the field, the stage of the family life cycle, the children's sense of rootedness in the culture, the financial burden on the church, and other considerations.

Retirement plans

International mission agencies must take into consideration that Asian countries are not welfare states that provide public health and retirement services for their citizens (as in the UK) or that have a system for social security payments after retirement (as in the USA). It is important that mission agencies and churches plan with their missionaries to consider retirement needs and encourage them to raise support either for pension plans or endowment policies.

Conclusion

In this article, I have discussed some specific issues for Asian missionaries and have made recommendations for providing these workers with member care. It must be highlighted that contextual variables such as differing economic, cultural, religious, political, and educational structures exist among various South East Asian countries, creating different experiences and challenges for each group. Asian missionaries are therefore not a homogeneous group, and differences among them must also be addressed. With the trend of increasing response to missions from Asians, sending churches and mission organizations can no longer ignore Asians' special concerns and challenges.

Reflection and Discussion

1. What are some of the main strengths of Asian missionaries that the author describes? In what ways do the strengths enhance their ministry?
2. Respond to the notion that Asian missionaries would usually be more effective if they worked together as a homogeneous group under an Asian organization.
3. In what ways can the cultural gap between Asian and Western missionaries be minimized, so that cross-cultural teamwork can be enhanced?
4. What are some possible changes in organizational structure that mission agencies may want to adopt to meet the challenge of internationalization of staff?
5. How can we sensitively address the issue of racism among missionaries and work towards removing the unconscious barriers to deeper trust and acceptance?

Gracia Wiarda *is Senior Therapist at the Counselling and Care Centre in Singapore. She is married to Dr. Timothy James Wiarda, a lecturer at Singapore Bible College. They have two children. Together they served with Arab World Ministries in Algeria and in the Sultanate of Oman (1980–1992). Gracia received her B.A. in psychology in 1975 from Wheaton College and an M.A. in interpersonal communications in 1976 from Wheaton Graduate School. She also holds a Marriage and Family Therapy degree (1989) from Hahnemann Graduate School in the USA. Email: wiarda@singnet.com.sg.*

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7

MK Education and Care: Lessons From Asia

POLLY CHAN

Asian sending countries are gradually becoming more involved in MK care. As more information, training, and support are offered, the result will be healthier families and more resilient MKs. This chapter looks at some of the ups and downs of Asian MK life, interspersed with three case studies. It concludes with several practical exercises and resources to help MKs and their families—both Asian and non-Asian.

I started my work with MKs in 1990 at an MK school in Japan. I was surprised to find that half of the students in the school were Asians—from Korea, Singapore, and Hong Kong! In December 1996, during the Missionary/Christian Overseas Schools (MCOS) Regional Rally in Manila, teachers and boarding home parents from different MK schools approached me and sought advice on how to help Asian children attending their schools. It was on that occasion that I became more aware of the increasing concern for Asian children at MK schools. A further concern was how MKs attending international or local schools on the field were struggling to readjust to school and life in their home country. Personnel in MK schools were becoming aware of the urgency of these needs. The relevance of MK support services and the need for MK workers are also being understood more and more on the Asian home side.

During the past decade, I have been grateful to see that both Western and Asian mission personnel and educators have responded positively to the dramatic increase of Asian MKs. The development of the two groups, though, has progressed at a different rate, with the Western response being earlier and quicker. The Asian mission community, however, is slowly but steadily catching up!

Some Background Perspectives

Asia has been the largest missionary sending continent in the Two-Thirds World (Barrett and Johnson, 2001; Pate, 1991, p. 29). Korean research in 1994, for example, has confirmed that country's continuous and dramatic growth in mission. Compared with the 93 Korean missionaries in 1979, the number had jumped to 3,272 by the end of June 1994 (Lee, 1994, p. 1). Excluding cross-cultural missionar-

ies reaching other peoples in their home country, Korea now ranks fourth in terms of overseas missionaries, following the USA, UK, and Canada. Some current estimates put Korean missionaries at about 8,000. Estimates of Indian missionaries working within India itself (often cross-culturally) are put at about 15,000 (Rajendran, 1998).

The number of Asian MKs is also growing, understandably! Research from 1988 through 1998 in my organization, Overseas Missionary Fellowship (OMF), for example, shows that the number of Asian MKs in OMF has more than quadrupled in the last 10 years and that the number of Asian sending countries has increased from five to eight. Besides Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, the Philippines, and Singapore, we now also have missionaries with children from Malaysia, Taiwan, and India. Other research (Chan, 1999) reveals that in the period 1988–1998, the number of MKs from Korea more than tripled, from 13 to 46.

As we look at these figures, we are excited to know that many Asians have joined the global mission force. With the relatively sudden increase in the number of Asian missionaries in the past decade, the concern is not only in sending out these missionaries, but also in how to take good care of them and their families. We are grateful to have our Western counterparts who have gone before us in this ministry. There are valuable experiences we can learn from them so as to avoid repeating previous mistakes in the ministry.

Nevertheless, there are also areas that are unique to the Asian culture and situation, and Asians need to invest personnel and resources in developing the ministry. For instance, recent research conducted by the Hong Kong Association of Christian Mission (HKACM) found that missionary parents reported that concern for their children ranked second among reasons for leaving the field, whereas it was seventh from the mission organization's perspective (Hung, 2000). For Singaporeans, a minimum bond of S$75,000 has to be paid to the government if parents choose to continue with overseas schooling for boys after they have reached the age of 11 (Taylor, 1993). Such a national policy has become a major hurdle for some families who would like to continue their ministry overseas after their boys turn 12. The next few years will be a critical period in the history of Korean missions, as the majority of Korean MKs pass through adolescence, work through identity issues, and possibly return "home" (Moon, 1997). A similar concern can be applied to other Asian countries with a monocultural and monolinguistic background, such as Japan, Taiwan, and even Hong Kong. There is a certain inflexibility in the culture and educational system in many Asian countries, which requires proactive care of Asian children, especially upon their reentry or at the time of the family's return.

Potential of Asian MKs

Asian MKs have great potential, and investing in the lives of these children is worth the effort. In the book *Kids Without Borders: Journals of Chinese Missionary Kids* (Chan, 2000), Chinese MKs of different ages, whose parents originally came from Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, and North America, shared their MK experiences. All of these Asian MKs spent their childhood on the mission field, such as in Africa, South America, and different Asian countries. Many of them had an English education in MK schools, while others studied in local schools on the mission field. All these children are fluent in at least two or three languages, including English, their mother tongue, and the field language. They have interests in the world that are not limited to their parents' country, and many of them also enjoy making international friends. Some of them even inherited their parents' vision and have become second-generation missionaries or are preparing to serve in overseas missions. MKs who have received an English education in MK/international Christian (IC) schools are usually able to bring out

the best of both Western and non-Western values and become fine examples of world Christians and cross-cultural workers (Loong, 2000).

Below is a short account written by a Singaporean MK who grew up in Africa. As you read, you will be amazed at the maturity and potential of these Asian MKs.

I Love Africa

*by Joel Ng Kuang-Jong**

Missionary kids (MKs) are a funny breed. I've often found that what is true for me is true for an MK who lives in India, South America, or elsewhere. We may come from the four corners of the earth, yet when we share our experiences with other MKs, we find ourselves saying, "That sounds just like what I did," or, "That's exactly how I feel." It's funny because we find so much in common among ourselves yet so little in common with our fellow countrymen.

Why is this so? I guess we view the world differently from the people at home. We are more in tune with what we have experienced during our formative years. As a child, I saw victims of a myriad of diseases nearly every day in the hospital where my father worked. Having seen such suffering, I felt I had no other choice as a fellow human being than to help these people who were no less made in God's image than I was. I made it a point to return to Africa, initially because I felt that I did not fit into the Singaporean way of life, but later because I realized that life would be so much more fulfilling there. This has prompted me to study Third World Development when I enter university in England this September.

As a member of a missionary family, I have learned to put my trust in God as I have seen Him perform miracles during my time in Africa. One of the many miracles we experienced was during a hot season in Africa. The rainy season was late that year, and we knew that the Africans would not have enough time to grow their crops if it did not rain soon. As we closed our nightly family devotions, we each prayed for rain, and as my father prayed, a heavy thunderstorm broke loose. Perhaps the most glorious sound in the world—raindrops on zinc roofing—continued through the night.

The comforts of Singapore have never left me at ease. The ugliness of materialism here is magnified by what I have seen in the Third World. We who have so much only want more, and we fail to recognize our blessings. It is difficult, then, to think of those who have so little, yet who rejoice in the little they do have. I guess I want to be like that—having little, yet each day thanking God for His blessings and relying on Him for the future.

It is even more amazing when the Africans, who have so little, freely give of what they have to visitors, even strangers, not thinking of what they may get in return. In Kefa Sempangi's testimony of life under Idi Amin's reign in Uganda, "Reign of Terror, Reign of Love," he recounts how a Dutch friend once told him, "Giving is not a two-way street, but to tell the truth it is a flowing river. It does not stop or return, but only passes on."

To me, working with the people of Africa is both a calling and a blessing. Their daily victories are the important ones we sometimes take for granted—life over death, health over sickness and disease, a bountiful harvest over starvation. Living close to them only heightens one's sense of blessing. Working in Africa is also something I have been very sure about. God has blessed me with the potential to do anything I want. In return, I find the most appropriate response is to pass on the gifts he has blessed me with to the people of my birthplace—Africa.

Challenges for Asians

Raising children overseas among different cultures has its challenges, some of

* Used with permission from *Intercom*, SIM Issue 141, September/October 1999.

which are unique to Asians. For instance, missionary parents may have to handle pressure from their extended family and friends, make changes in their Asian lifestyle, and broaden their monocultural mindset. For Asian MKs, growing up overseas has many privileges, but returning to live and study in the parents' home country, where people have low tolerance of cultural differences, can be very difficult. The education of MKs has been a pressing issue for Asians, and it will take time before some good Asian MK educational options can be more fully developed. Besides facing unique challenges as Asians, many Asian MKs also share with their non-Asian counterparts the challenge of making frequent transitions. Saying hellos and good-byes to people and places can be very hard, not only for adults, but for children as well. Many adult Asian MK caregivers and even parents may not be aware of the effect that unresolved grief may have on these children.

Sacrifice in Missions

Asians value relationships, and they are closely tied to their extended family. Missionary parents may face pressure from relatives, friends, and even other Christians who do not understand missions and who discourage them from taking their young children to "suffer" in disadvantaged places. In response to such opposition, it is important for parents to have a clear sense of calling from the Lord. Parents also need to have a balanced view of the gains and losses of being an MK. They need to count the cost of bringing up children on the mission field but also believe that the overseas experience will bring blessings to their children. In times of trial, they need to trust that God has good plans for their children—plans to prosper and not to harm them (Jer. 29:11).

Balance Between Family and Ministry

Having both quantity and quality time with children is important. Some Asian parents are so involved in their work that they have neglected the needs of their children. Others understand the importance of spending time with the family, but they struggle to put their head knowledge into practice. Once a Korean MK in our boarding school shared that during the summer holiday, 17 mission teams visited his family, and his mother was busy all the time cooking for the visitors. Parents may need to be more assertive in protecting their family time, as well as in taking adequate rest time for their own physical and mental health. They may also need to help mission leaders and supporting churches understand their family needs and establish a work schedule together, including vacation time for the family.

It is healthy and important for children to be involved in their parents' ministry. A teenage Chinese MK shared that because of the relocation of her parents' ministry, she had to move with the family and had studied in nine different schools, with no more than two years in each school. Nevertheless, she was grateful for her parents' efforts to help her understand their work and its importance. She then added that it was also through difficult times that the Lord had enabled her to experience more of His love and faithfulness. Family and ministry are both important, and wisdom is needed to maintain a good balance.

MK Identity Issues

Parents from a monocultural background often struggle with how to help their children maintain their national identity and at the same time remain international. I once heard a Korean MK saying that her father was racist, because he forbade her to date a Caucasian fellow. The truth was that the girl's parents cared deeply for her, and they understood the challenges that cross-cultural marriage would bring, along with the pressure their daughter would face in Korean society if she ended up marrying a non-Korean.

Many Asian families who have sent their children to MK/IC schools, where Western culture prevails, struggle with the fear of their children being Westernized.

However, they are also pleased that their children can learn good English and get an international flavor in these schools. There is no easy solution to the national/international identity challenge. Parents must think things through carefully when making decisions about their children's schooling. As they try to stretch their children to be more international, they in turn may need to stretch themselves. They may need to improve their English and learn more about Western culture, so as to narrow the gap between themselves and their children who are educated in an international school setting.

A Korean mother was very concerned about her son's cultural identity. After attending a seminar and hearing about the gains and losses of being a third-culture kid (TCK), her eyes sparkled as she shared, "Instead of changing my son, I should change myself!" Asian MKs who come from a monocultural and monolinguistic background will anticipate more challenges as they return to their home country. But as the world shrinks into a global village, these monocultural Asian countries are becoming more and more open to the rest of the world. We anticipate that the adjustment challenges during MK reentry will be reduced in the days to come.

Long-Term Educational Planning

Frequent moves significantly impact children's education, not to mention their social world! It is difficult switching from one school to another and from one educational model to another. It is an advantage to learn different languages, but if the child does not stay in one language system long enough, she/he will not be able to consolidate the language. Academically, there will be gaps in learning as the MK changes from one educational system to another. These are only a few examples of the costs of frequent moves when parents do not have a long-range plan for their children's education.

Schooling in the Asian home country during the parents' home assignment and when the family returns home due to unexpected reasons is a big challenge for Asian MKs. It is especially difficult for older MKs who have not acquired much academic language in the mother tongue and do not know much about the home culture. In many Asian countries, the local educational system is pressurized and competitive. Peer pressure is also intense. Parents are advised to make a long-term educational plan for their children, including schooling during the parents' home assignment as well as tertiary education. Parents need to decide when will be the best time to send their children back to settle in the home country, if it is their wish. For families who are considering sending their children to North America or Europe for tertiary education, the financial implications must be considered. Many mission agencies and churches only support MK education until high school.

Transition to the parents' home country is also a big challenge. It is very helpful if parents and teachers, both on the field and in the home country, can be in close communication and work together to find ways to prepare the children for transitions. Parents need to prepare to give extra time and support to their children during the process. Sometimes one of the parents may even have to put aside the ministry for a while so as to stay at home full-time to help the children settle. Despite the difficulties upon reentry, there are more and more successful cases of Asian MKs returning to Asia for high school and even for university.

Making Transitions

Making transitions is another big issue closely related to frequent moving and changing schools. It is emotionally draining for a child to have developed friendships in one place and then have to say good-bye in a year's time and make new friends in another place. Children can feel the pain, and they do not need to wait until they grow up to reflect on the experience and do something about the wounds. The book *The Third Culture Kid*

Experience (Pollock & Van Reken, 1999), helps parents understand separation as well as how to prepare for and work through transitions.

Sometimes moving is inevitable, and it is part of the cost in missions. Besides helping children understand the presence of God in the moves, it is important for parents to strengthen their relationship with their children. Many MKs claim that "home" is wherever the family is. It is marked with a sense of relational belonging rather than geographic location. A stable and healthy family gives children a sense of security in the midst of transitions. Parents can be more sensitive to children's reactions to moving and can encourage them to share both positive and negative feelings about the moves. Asians are more reserved in sharing emotions openly. This is an area that parents can first work on themselves and set an example for their children.

Reentry

Besides academic challenges, the social and cultural adjustments that MKs face upon reentry cannot be underestimated. No wonder some MKs are not so keen about returning "home"! Relatives, friends in school, and even people at church may tease MKs about their accent when they try to speak in the mother tongue. They may regard them as strange, since these children do not fit into the cultural norm. For instance, MKs may walk barefoot in the house, and they may not bow properly to the elders and teachers. Asian MKs who studied in an international school generally speak excellent English, and the teenage girls may dye their hair and color their nails. Reentry will be a particular challenge for teenage MKs who have few friends in the home country.

Close ties with the extended Asian family can be a big support for MKs. I know some MKs who have kept in close touch with their cousins in the home country and who look forward to seeing them when they return home. In Korea, one church has set up an MK care group to support their returning MKs. Older brothers and sisters in the church reach out to these MKs and become good mentors for them. In Hong Kong, an MK care group has been established to provide intermission services to care for all missionary families sent out from Hong Kong.

Below is an account based on an interview with a Chinese MK who grew up in Japan. It will help us understand some of the challenges these MKs face as they grow up among different cultures.

Gains and Losses as an MK

*by Karen Wong Chiao-Lin**

Many people may wonder how different an MK is from other children who grew up in their parents' country. What are the gains and losses of being an MK? Perhaps I can share my experience to help you understand more about the life of an MK.

I was born in Hong Kong and left for Japan with my parents and younger sister when I was seven. Before we went to Japan, we also spent some time in Singapore. At that time, my parents were in cross-cultural training. I remember going to kindergarten in Hong Kong and Singapore. I was very young then, so my memories of kindergarten are vague. After we settled in Japan, my sister and I first went to a Chinese school near Tokyo. We only studied there for a few months and then changed to a local Japanese school. I studied in two different Japanese schools for a total of three years. My experience in Japanese school was not that exciting at the beginning. I still remember being bullied by Japanese classmates. Nevertheless, we were grateful to have a good teacher. One time, she told the class that Japanese *kanji* (characters) originated from Chinese writing. She then introduced me to the class. After that, my classmates started

* Used with permission from *Kids Without Borders: Journals of Chinese Missionary Kids*, 1999.

addressing me as Chinese *sansei* (teacher) and even asked me to write their names in Chinese!

Because of my parents' work, our family moved again. We moved to Tsukuba, and I started attending a small international school there. That was where I started my English education. Since it was an elementary school, I stayed there for just two years before changing to the Christian Academy of Japan (CAJ) for middle school. I liked CAJ very much. It was the first time I felt at home in school. The teachers were very understanding, and many of my friends were MKs. Unlike in the local school, I did not feel very different from others. Unfortunately, I didn't study there for long. After one year, my family had to leave Japan. At that time, my parents sent my sister and me to board at Dalat School in Malaysia. Adjusting to Dalat was difficult for me. I think it was mainly because I missed Japan so much. I am 14 this year, and I have spent seven years, which is half of my life, in Japan. Japan is really my home! When I first started school in Malaysia, I always compared Dalat with CAJ. After the first school term, however, I started to develop a sense of belonging to this school and have made many friends here. Dalat is the ninth school I have attended. Sometimes I joke with my friends, saying that I just want to experience what it would be like to study in a school for more than two years!

People might wonder how I felt about moving from one place to another and changing schools so many times. Sometimes I found moving to be quite difficult. I told myself that if I were a parent, I would not want my children to be MKs. It's tiring making new friends all the time. In spite of this, I am thankful that I enjoy making new friends. Now I have friends in many different places, and we still keep in touch through email. I am also grateful that I can speak Japanese, English, and Chinese. A few months ago, Dalat had an exchange program with a Japanese school in Penang. My sister and I were very honored to be asked by our teachers to be the interpreters during the school visits. Although we are studying in an English language school, my sister and I like to talk to each other in Japanese so that we won't forget the language.

There are gains and losses being an MK. Moving is not easy. Nevertheless, if I were given a choice, I would still choose to live the way I am instead of being stuck in one place all the time. It is really a privilege to be able to move around and see more of the world! I am very thankful to my parents for helping me understand what they are doing and the importance of their work. Sometimes, life can be difficult. But when I think about the souls that my parents have gained for Christ, the losses I have experienced being an MK become insignificant. It is also through difficult times that I understand God better and have been able to experience more of His faithfulness.

Some Updates and Strategies for Asian MK Education

MK education is a pressing need that usually draws immediate attention. Western and Asian educators have felt the urgency to provide suitable support for Asian children in their schools, fearing these children would become too Westernized. Many attempts have been made to cater to the educational needs of Asian MKs, as seen in the type of curriculum offered, the publications of groups such as the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI), and several significant conferences. These conferences, in particular, have helped boost the awareness among Asians of Asian MK care.

Western/Asian Partnership

Partnership with individual MK schools. In the early 1970s, the Mother Tongue Studies (MTS) program was set up at Ukarumpa International School in Papua New Guinea, run by the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL). Students whose mother tongue is not English can learn in their mother tongue and develop

their national identity within the context of international education. At present, the school offers MTS programs to five language groups: Dutch, Finnish, Swedish, Japanese, and Korean. Trained teachers from each national group are recruited to serve on the international team. The MTS program is not only a program to serve the Asian community, but a truly international effort in MK education.

In recent years, more and more Asian countries are becoming aware of the need to send and support teachers to serve Asian nationals and other students in MK schools. For instance, there are Korean and Japanese teachers at Ukarumpa International School in PNG, and a Hong Kong teacher at Dalat School in Malaysia.

Although not all MK schools offer international education to such an extent, creative attempts have been made in different MK schools to meet the needs of the international student body. Since there is a growing number of Asians in these schools, more and more MK schools, originally dominated by Western culture, have now become more culturally sensitive to the needs of these Asian students. The Murree Christian School in Pakistan is a good illustration of what some MK schools have attempted to do in Asian MK care (Billing, 1998). Dialogue started between school staff and the Asian parents; as a result, the school curriculum was adapted, and even the menu in the boarding homes became more international. Nevertheless, despite the efforts of some MK/IC schools in making significant changes in their schools, there is still much variation regarding the truly international nature of international schooling.

International consultations and conferences. In response to the increasing number of Asian students in MK/IC schools in Europe, 38 MK educators and caregivers met for the first time at the Asia Forum in Germany, April 19-21, 1999. The forum was organized by ACSI and sponsored by Black Forest Academy in Germany, with the goal of preparing recommendations, guidelines, and strategies for better serving Asian students and their families in MK/IC schools. Issues related to understanding Asian culture, educational systems, educational philosophy, and parents' and missions' expectations were discussed. Asian mission leaders shared their hope that schools could help Asian MKs make the transition back to their home country. Subsequently, 12 consensus statements were written and shared with other MK/IC schools around the world. MK educators also gave suggestions for Asian sending countries about how they can support MK/IC schools in the education of Asian MKs.*

The Missionary/Christian Overseas Schools (MCOS) conference, sponsored by ACSI and held in Korea in November 1999, further strengthened what had been discussed in Germany earlier that year. Since the conference took place in Korea, it also provided a marvelous opportunity for many Korean educators and mission leaders to interact with experienced Western MK personnel. Because Korea has the largest number of Asian MKs, the conference helped to fire the ministry in the country. It has been exciting to see the launch of an educational project for Koreans in Eastern Europe, with strong Western/Korean partnership. Another result is that 12 Korean mission organizations are now meeting regularly to share experiences and resources in the MK ministry.

Developments in Asian MK Education

In contrast to the enthusiasm of Western counterparts in the care of the educational needs of Asian MKs, the rate of development in the different Asian countries varies, depending on the pace of their mission growth. In order to make MK education viable, we need to have a cluster of children from the same ethnic group who

* Details of the Asia Forum, the consensus statements, and the wish list are included in ACSI's *World Report*, September/October 1999.

share the same need. If such a cluster or critical mass does not exist, it is hard to convince mission agencies to invest. Nevertheless, we are encouraged to see that different Asian countries are working at their own speed, and more and more helpful MK educational projects have been launched in recent years.

National MK schools and hostels. Some Asian countries, such as Korea, have enough MKs to set up their own school. The first Korean MK school, Hankuk Academy, was established in Manila in 1994. The school has recently set up boarding facilities to cater to the needs of children from families who live too far away to commute to school. In 1998, the first Korean MK hostel was set up near an IC school in Chiang Mai, Thailand, to serve Korean families in other parts of Thailand and those who live across the borders. At present, some Korean educators in Korea are in the process of setting up a high school with boarding facilities to serve families who would like to send their children back to Korea for education.

Proposed hostel projects. At present, and with the view of supporting missionaries with boys over age 11, mission and church leaders in Singapore have proposed setting up a hostel in Singapore to enable parents to continue their service on the field. In Hong Kong, some mission leaders are thinking of a similar project in order to encourage MKs to stay in Hong Kong for their tertiary education.

Resources and advice for parents. In some Asian countries, more and more home-schooling materials, especially on learning the mother tongue, have been produced. Handbooks and books on MK education have been published or are in the process of being published by different Asian countries, to guide parents regarding children's education, as well as to provide information on educational resources (see Appendix 2 at the end of this article). At present, these handbooks are available for Koreans, Filipinos, Hong Kongese, and Malaysians. Also, several Asian advisors on MK education and family care are available to provide consultation services within their mission agency and for parents in other mission organizations as well.

Today, more and more overseas Asian schools set up by the government are found on different mission fields, located mainly in major cities. Some examples include the Japanese School in Taipei, the Taiwanese School in Bangkok, and the Korean and Singaporean International School in Hong Kong. Some of these schools are well established and can be a good resource for Asian missionary families. For the mission community, most of the educational projects, such as the Korean MK school in Manila, the American/Korean dual track model in Eastern Europe, and the field and home hostel projects are still at an experimental stage. It will take some time to evaluate the effectiveness of these models. Nonetheless, it is very encouraging to see Asians initiating various creative educational projects.

Case Study: HKACM MK Care Group

Following is a description of the Hong Kong Association of Christian Mission (HKACM) MK Care Group. It illustrates the kind of support that has been provided for missionary families and how education about MK care is taking place for mission agencies and sending churches.

History and Composition of the MK Care Group

Twenty years ago, some mission leaders and missionary parents in Hong Kong started voicing concern about MK education. At that time, there were only a few school-age MKs, and these families were scattered in many different countries around the world. Unfortunately, at that time, very little was done for these children. In 1995, in response to the increasing number of Hong Kong MKs, an MK Care Group was set up under HKACM, an organization which provides inter-mission support services in Hong Kong. Since

none of the mission agencies in Hong Kong had done anything about the care of missionaries' children at that time, the MK Care Group maximized resources and provided inter-mission services to all missionary families sent out from Hong Kong. The group is now composed of mission personnel, MK parents, a church pastor, a Christian educational psychologist, and a professional counselor. All members of the group are part-time volunteers.

Since its inception, the group has done various projects, and we have been able to gain the trust of parents, mission agencies, and sending churches. Since many of the ideas originated in the West, we have had to make some modifications to meet our own needs.

Educating Mission Leaders and Supporting Churches

Seminars. Missionary parents have been encouraged and invited to share about MK care during seminars with mission leaders and churches. Previously, missionaries had shared about their ministry but seldom talked about the joys and struggles in their families. Many people claimed that this was the first time they had heard about the need of MK care.

Short-term mission trips. Several trips for church and mission leaders to visit MK boarding schools have been organized. Running an MK hostel or boarding school is something very new to us. The visits to these boarding schools and hostels have helped leaders and supporters better understand the ministry of boarding home parenting. In response to the expressed desire of some parents to provide supplementary language teaching in their mother tongue to their children at home, some of the sending agencies and churches have mobilized teachers to use their summer vacation in tutoring these MKs on the mission field.

Publications. Literature is a powerful means of education. As the ministry develops, more books, articles, and leaflets are being published. Most of them are written by local missionary parents and MKs, while some were translated from English MK literature.

Training. Recently, a 12-session training course has been offered to mission leaders on general missionary/member care. Two of these sessions focused on MK care and education. In-depth discussions on marital relationships, family planning, views on boarding, etc., were included. The participants also discussed MK care and education policies at different stages of child development, ranging from the pregnancy of the mother to options for funding MKs' tertiary education. Expectations of workers at different stages of ministry, such as during language learning and home assignment, were also presented. We hope that this course will help mission/church leaders as they formulate MK policy for their organizations.

Parental Support

Pre-field orientation (PFO). It is very important for parents to be aware of cross-cultural parenting and MK issues before they leave for the field. The first PFO for parents was held in June 2000 and the second one in October of the same year. Topics covered included issues related to third-culture kids, MK education, and parenting and child development. We plan to offer this kind of PFO on a regular basis in the future.

Consultation. We offer consultation services to parents in the area of MK education, parenting, and reentry. Currently most of the adult missionary candidates undergo psychological screening with our professional counselor in the HKACM. The HKACM counselor and the educational psychologist in the MK Care Group are in close communication to help families who need advice on child development and parenting issues. Many parents have found this service especially helpful. Our psychologists also visit missionary families on the field.

Fellowship. Whenever there is a group of parents in transit in Hong Kong, we try to organize seminars or meetings so these parents can meet together, have fellow-

ship, talk, and pray with each other. A column in the HKACM quarterly journal for missionaries has been reserved for parents to share their experiences on family issues.

Resource center. We have a resource center on MK care and education which is part of the HKACM library. Updated changes in the local educational policies, teaching resources, and MK books and articles are available for parents.

MK Education

Home-school curriculum. A three-year curriculum is available with teaching materials to help parents teach Chinese to their Hong Kong pre-school MKs .

Dalat/Hong Kong project. In 1998, HKACM started an educational project with Dalat School, an MK school in Malaysia, to help Hong Kong students in the school maintain their mother tongue and culture. In 1999, a Hong Kong teacher was sent to help in the school.

Hong Kong MK hostel project. Encouraged by the education project in Malaysia, a local mission agency is considering a pilot project to set up an MK hostel in Hong Kong, to provide an option for parents who wish to send their children back to Hong Kong for education. It is encouraging to see that more options for educational support are being discussed and made available to families.

Tertiary education. Several Hong Kong MKs are studying in MK/IC schools on the field. In the coming years, many will likely further their education by attending universities in North America. Mission and church leaders have become more and more concerned about financing tertiary education for these children if they go overseas. We have set up a study group to explore the possibility of subsidizing the education of these MKs.

MK Care

This is an area that we would like to develop in the near future. Our MKs vary from pre-school ages to high school and college young adults. The need to care for teenage and young adult MKs is especially apparent. We need to help develop a support system for these MKs, as well as help to provide suitable career guidance for them.

When the MK Care Group was first set up in Hong Kong, most people were frankly skeptical about the necessity of MK care in mission. As the ministry develops, more people are becoming convinced of its importance and have shown more appreciation of our work. Our two biggest challenges since we started the MK Care Group are the need to have a full-time person coordinating the group and finding viable ways to finance the ministry. Nevertheless, we trust that the Lord will meet our needs as we keep the vision and continue to be faithful in the ministry.

Future Directions

Asian/Western Partnership

Asian/Western partnership in MK education and care needs to be strengthened continually. We are grateful that the partnership is happening, and there is much that Asians can learn from the rich experience of our Western counterparts. On the other hand, as we know, the cultures and educational philosophies of East and West are quite different. The dialogue between MK personnel from these two parties needs to continue, so that both groups understand the best ways to educate and care for MKs.

Asian/Asian Partnership

Another area of partnership is inter-mission collaboration between different Asian countries. In some Asian countries, there is still a lot of room for the ministry to be developed. In order to maximize resources and reduce the duplication of work, inter-mission partnership and partnership with and among churches should be encouraged, at least at the beginning stage. As with international partnerships, working together with mission agencies and churches of different backgrounds can be a big challenge. However, as we share common goals in world evangelism and

MK care, we believe that many barriers can be overcome.

Asian/North American Asian Partnership

There are many resources among Asian churches in North America. Many overseas Asians are bilingual and bicultural. They can be effective bridges between Asians and Westerners in MK schools. I know an American Korean who used to mobilize Korean teachers in the USA and has now become a teacher in the Korean MK school in the Philippines. A Chinese couple from Canada are serving at Black Forest Academy in Germany. There are multitudes of resources among overseas Asian churches that are just waiting to be tapped!

Demography of Asian MKs

We need some more good research in mapping out the demography of missionary families sent from each Asian country. The findings will be a strategic tool in helping to allocate resources in the ministry. Needs of MKs in different age groups are different. It will be helpful for mission leaders and educators to find out the number of MKs in each age range, their location, and their educational needs. Such data will help leaders make plans to support families in ministry. For example, if mission leaders anticipate a cluster of school-age MKs from the same ethnic group in a particular location, they can be more proactive in planning to meet their educational needs.

Asian MK Educational Models

The existing MK/IC schools set up by Western colleagues have attracted many Asian families. However, families who would like their children to have a more national-based education may not be content with the international education offered by these schools. We are encouraged to see the establishment of the first Korean MK boarding school in Manila and Korean MK hostel in Chiang Mai. However, we need further improvement in the curriculum of our Asian MK schools and the care in our boarding homes. How special it would be to set up an Asian-based international school where the beauty of multiculturalism can be celebrated in school! We also hope to see home-side high school options created to meet the educational needs of returning MKs. Traditional MK educational models may not be able to meet the different needs of MK families. Asian educators must create educational models for this new generation. For instance, the one-room classroom, the online school, and other non-traditional models can be explored.

Recruiting MK Teachers and Caregivers

As the number of Asian MKs has increased drastically, more and more MK schools around the world are requesting Asian teachers to teach in their schools. Mission agencies can be more proactive in recruiting qualified and well-supported Asian and North American Asian teachers to serve in these overseas schools. We need experienced and creative teachers with a heart for missions to be involved in the ministry of MK education. Boarding home parents are also needed. As many Asian countries are planning to start their own MK boarding homes, the vision needs to be shared in Asian churches. Many Asians have not heard about such needs, and so they must be informed about the opportunities, qualifications, and preparation for this type of ministry. One idea is to send Asians to help in existing boarding homes run by Western colleagues in order to gain some on-the-job experience.

Care for MK Personnel

Practical investment in equipping MK educators and personnel is a must. First, the status of MK educators, boarding staff, and caregivers needs to be raised. Although these are staff in support roles, they are of the same importance in the mission team. They are not "second class" mission personnel and thus should be

recognized like missionaries and get the same kind of support as those doing church planting on the mission field. These MK personnel also need to have a mission call and be equipped for cross-cultural living and ministry. Support and supervision for MK boarding home staff are essential. As personnel in boarding or hostel parenting have a great impact on the lives of MKs, it is important for them to have special pre-field and on-the-job training in their ministry, clear guidelines and supervision, as well as good pastoral care and support.

It is often a challenge for our MK teachers and caregivers to commit themselves for long periods in this ministry. We so appreciate those who can serve as teachers for families on the field for one summer or those who can serve for one to two years in an MK school. However, it will be even better if we can have well-supported teachers who are prepared to be committed for long-term ministry. I know some Western teachers who have taught MKs on the field for almost 40 years, until their retirement. What a powerful testimony their service is to the mission community!

Conclusion

More and more Asians are becoming committed to MK care. Providing such care is a strategic way to support missionaries in fulfilling the Great Commission, and it is worth doing because Asian MKs are precious and of great value. These children have immense potential. We need people who can love, care for, and understand them, as well as advocate, protect, support, and nurture them so that they can develop their potential. Lord willing, many of them will become second-generation missionaries and effective ambassadors for Christ in the international field.

In 1995, when I started mobilizing Asians in this ministry, I was very frustrated by the slow response in the Asian countries. An experienced Asian missionary trainer, who is an MK himself with two adult MKs of his own, gave me a great deal of encouragement. He also helped me understand that our Western colleagues have spent several decades doing MK care and that Asians have just begun this ministry. We need more patience. I can testify that since the ministry started, the Lord has worked many miraculous things in Asian MK care and has brought about many breakthroughs. The Lord cares for our Asian MKs, and so does our mission community. There is now a good sense of momentum in MK care. As we persevere, I do not think we will have to wait long before we see this ministry really take off and become established.

Reflection and Discussion

1. Do you see MK education and care as a priority in missions? What has been done in your country to show that it is a priority, and in what ways can the ministry be improved?

2. Imagine you are a mission or church leader. List five important questions about family and MK educational issues to ask a couple with two children, aged five and seven, who are going to apply to be missionaries.

3. How would you respond when non-Christians, or even Christian relatives and close friends, question why you as a prospective missionary couple are going to take your children to "suffer" in disadvantaged countries?

4. You are parents of a missionary family that will be returning for a year of home assignment in three months' time. How would you prepare your children to return to the home country for high school or tertiary education, and what kind of support (educational, social, cultural, etc.) is available to make their return smoother?

5. In what ways can the supporting church be involved in MK care? For instance, how could the church help with meeting the educational needs of MKs; strengthening the family relationship; supporting the family during preparation, field work, and reentry; and in general developing MK potential?

Appendix 1
Some Practical Exercises for MK Families

Preparation for Transitions

- Despite busy schedules, parents are encouraged to cultivate a tradition in the family to spend time regularly with the children. For instance, the whole family can go out for ice cream or walk in the park once every week. These outings provide a good way to strengthen relationships and encourage communication in the family.
- Talk to the children about the place where the family is moving. Parents are encouraged to involve their older children in the decision making. Do a project with the children on the country where the family is going. It can include pictures and newspaper clippings of the country and descriptions about the people, climate, food, houses, etc.
- Help children arrange a farewell party. Encourage them to make a list of people whom they would like to invite. Help them understand that they can maintain friendships through correspondence.
- Ask the children what places they would like to visit and whom they would like to see before they leave a place, and take them for a last visit. Make sure to take along a camera and take photos of these places and with these people.
- Spend time with the children and encourage them to talk out their feelings of moving. Sometimes, parents can first start talking about their feelings, such as their excitement, sadness, fears, and anxieties about the move.
- Encourage children to do the packing with parents. They can pack the toys they would like to take, and with the help of parents, they can decide what to do with things that they cannot take with them.
- Parents will be extremely busy during the last few weeks before the family departs. Be careful not to tire young children out too much by taking them to a lot of meetings. One parent can stay home with the children while the spouse attends these meetings.
- Encourage children to develop some bridge-building skills which do not require the use of language, such as sports and music. These skills will make it easier for MKs to fit into a new culture and will enable them to make friends in a new place.

Maintaining the Mother Tongue and Culture

- Always talk to children in the mother tongue at home.
- Take the children to a bookstore in the home country and ask them to choose story books and tapes they like. These will be the teaching materials in the mother tongue when they are on the field.
- Encourage the extended family to write, email, phone the children, and send them little gifts when the family is overseas. It will be even better if the relatives can make short visits to the mission field and stay with the family.
- Make a big picture of the family tree, with photos of the relatives, and post it in the house. Encourage the children to send birthday cards to each of the relatives and cousins and encourage them to keep in contact.

Preparation for Reentry

- Have friends send news and magazines of the home country while the family is overseas. This information will be very helpful in preparing the family for reentry.
- Spend more time with the children, especially the first couple of months after arrival. Listen to their excitement and worries. The parents' home may be a foreign place to the children.
- Help relatives, friends, and teachers understand the overseas experiences of MKs so that they will be more tolerant of these children, as they may not readily conform to the norm in the home culture.
- Set up a buddy system at home. It would be ideal to have another MK take

care of returning MKs and tell them the do's and don'ts in the "home" culture.

MK Education

- Parents are encouraged to make a long-range plan for their children's education. The plan should include where to go to school during furlough in the home country and MKs' tertiary education.
- The education system in many Asian countries is changing rapidly. Have friends at home inform parents of the changes in the education system and schooling policies.
- If parents are planning to send their children back to the home country for further education, they should make sure that their children will have a chance to learn the academic language in the mother tongue while they are overseas. Teaching can be done by parents or a tutor.
- If non-English-speaking Asian parents are planning to send their children to MK or international schools, they should be prepared to learn more English themselves and gain a better understanding of Western culture. Also, it is important to prepare the children with more English before school.

Appendix 2
Asian Books and Handbooks

Korean

Park, N. (1999). *Korean MK handbook: A comprehensive resource book for parents and caregivers*. Seoul, Korea: GMF Press.

MK Journal (quarterly magazine). Seoul, Korea: GMF Press.

Pre-field orientation seminar for MK parents (manual and nine audiotapes).

Daily quiet time – Grades 4-6 (available in Korean and English), Yejoung Com.

➤ Orders for the above can be made through MKNEST Korea, www.mknest.org.

Chinese

Chan, P. (Ed.). (1997). *Nurturing missionaries' children*. Hong Kong: HKACM.

———. (2000). *Kids without borders: Journals of Chinese missionary kids*. Hong Kong: HKACM and OMF HK.

Fung, J. (Ed.) (2000). *Harold and Stanley say good-bye*. Hong Kong: OMF HK.

Sojourners: The family on the move. Taiwan Chinese Christian Mission, 1999.

➤ Orders for the above can be made through HKACM, Hong Kong, hkacm@hkacm.org.hk.

Philippines

Manzano, J., & Manzano, R. (1999). *Filipino MKs: Which schooling option?* OMF Philippines.

➤ Orders can be made through OMF Philippines, ph-gs@omf.net.

Malaysia

Kumar, B. (2000). *Member care handbook: A guide to caring for our missionaries.*

➤ Orders can be made to Beram Kumar, sbks@pc.jaring.my.

Japan

➤ For matters on Japanese MKs, contact Toshio Nagai of Wycliffe Japan: toshio_nagai@wycliffe.org.

Other Useful Resources and Websites

Educator teaching overseas. CHED Family Services Department of Wycliffe Bible Translators (WBT) USA.

Educational options: Europe and Christian international schools. S.H.A.R.E., 1996.

Interact (periodical on MK issues), www.tckinteract.net.

Parents teaching overseas. CHED Family Services Department of WBT USA.

World Report. Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI), www.acsi.org.

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Pate, L. (1991). The dramatic growth of Two-Thirds World missions. In W. Taylor (Ed.), *Internationalizing missionary training: A global perspective* (pp. 26-39). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.

Pauls, D., & Pauls, N. (1993). Looking at yesterday for tomorrow's clues: Summary of MK CART/CORE research findings on adult MKs. *Parents teaching overseas*. Dallas, TX: CEFD WBT USA.

Pollock, D., & Van Reken, R. (1999). *The third culture kid experience: Growing up among worlds*. Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press.

Rajendran, K. (1998). *Which way forward Indian missions? A critique of twenty-five years 1972–1997*. Bangalore, India: SAIACS Press.

Taylor, B. (1993, September 20-23). *Perspectives on global attrition: Examining the iceberg*. Paper presented at EFMA/IFMA Triennial Leadership Conference, Orlando, FL.

Taylor, W. (Ed.). (1997). *Too valuable to lose: Exploring the causes and cures of missionary attrition*. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library.

***Polly Chan** joined OMF in 1990 and served two years at Chefoo School, an OMF MK boarding school in Japan. She then furthered her studies at Wheaton College in USA in 1993, graduating with a master's degree in education in ministry, with a focus on MK education and care. She received a bachelor's degree in psychology from Canada, and she is also a certified high school teacher in Hong Kong. In 1995, Polly was appointed by OMF International in her current ministry to coordinate the care of Asian MKs. In the same year, she also helped to set up and coordinate the MK Care Group in HKACM. Polly has co-chaired the Member Care/Asia Task Force, an interagency ministry of the Evangelical Fellowship of Asia's Missions Commission, since its inception in 1997. Email: ChanPolly@omf.net.*

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8

Care for Christian Workers In India: Dark Obstacles And Divine Opportunities

K. K. Rajendran

Christian workers in India are called to serve in some very challenging places. Over the last few years, we have seen the good hand of the Lord at work both in and through His servants, as they minister to fellow Indians and beyond. This article focuses on the various pastoral care structures, people, and programs that are emerging to provide support to Indian workers as they minister to others. There are, in fact, many good things into which the Lord is guiding us—divine opportunities—to enable us to care well for His sheep (John 21).

It is 12:45, after midnight. I toss in bed, pleading for sleep to overtake me. I was very tired with all that happened today. When I finished my evening meal, I went to bed at 8:30 p.m. I woke up with dust in the air and listened to the new Indian city phenomenon of FM radio. The old, melodious Hindi songs were good. After a while, I got bored and continued to fight my sleeplessness. Insomnia! Or is it fears to which I have become numb?

It is now 1:15 a.m. I toss in bed, yearning again for sleep to overtake me. The opportunities for communicating Christ in India are fantastic. There are 141 member missions with the India Missions Association (IMA). Persecution of Christians is daunting in the country, and fanatics are acting like Nazis, even though India, as a country, is moving forward. As Christians, we are trying to be positive with a belief in the sovereignty of God. There is a rat race, as so many groups are trying to be the definitive voice of Christians. There are tendencies to attract the "global Christian market" by the distinctiveness of our organizations. If possible, we add spice—*masala*—to increase the flavor of our organizational descriptions. Or to use another metaphor, we are willing to play different types of chords to attract outside interest:

- Regional chords such as South, North, and North East Indians.
- The chord of the despicable caste tantrum.
- The chord of the church versus parachurch organizations.
- The chord, "North India is needier than the South."
- The chord of sending Christian workers versus using native workers.
- The chord of Christian workers feeling that "there are no good local people to train and carry on the work"

versus the locals feeling that "there are no good Christian workers, and they are exploiting us."

- The chord that the Dalits (the lower caste people in the Hindu ladder of castes) are neglected, while the upper caste Christians "rule" over them.
- The chord of some saying that the Dalits are lazy and incompetent.
- The chord of male chauvinism and a forced submission of women, while 50% of the nation of India consists of unreached women who will never be reached by men.

We can add many more chords to our organizational music. Such practices, though, will continue to keep us disunited and will carry us through the next millennium without making a dent in sharing the love of the Lord Jesus Christ in India.

We are asking many questions: Where are we going as the church, as missions, as Christian workers, and as human beings who want to follow Christ? Who will share Christ with the growing urbanites and the emerging educated class, 30% of whom are women? Who will go to the rural people, who comprise 60% of our overall population of one billion people? Who is teaching the gospel-sharers? Who is teaching the emerging new Christians, some of whom dare to go to churches in areas where there is potential persecution?

Who is training people to share Christ with different sectors of the Indian masses? There are several Bible colleges, seminaries, and missiological and cross-cultural "pedagogues"—what are they up to? Do they have the whole picture of India? What is their philosophy of training, and for what do they train people? What are the end results envisioned? Is the training simply for the purpose of maintaining the existing churches and winning a few more token converts? Where are the trainers for the grassroots workers? Where are the workers who will go to the income-tax payees and the yuppie Indians who are moving to other parts of the world and perpetuating stronger "Indian culture"?

We are also asking about the vision of Indian Christians for India. Often, Indian Christian churches and missions are puny-minded and have very little challenge to harness the politics, art, culture, and imagination of Indians. No wonder we are minorities forever. Christians are not mainstreamers but peripheral onlookers who are highly trained to be critical of both the secular and the sacred. Our pet theologies (not the Pauline theology of Christ) have made us critical of everything.

These questions meander through my mind and nearly overwhelm me until 2:20 a.m. Although all these are "high, legitimate, and honorable" thoughts, I start to become worried about different "earthly, no good" thoughts too. Where should my children go to school? My daughter faxed her application forms today, paying 1,260 rupees, trying to find admission in a college for her post-graduate studies. What do I do with my son in 11th grade, who is growing bigger than I am! I am 49. Where will I end up if I get a stroke or cancer or a heart attack? By God's providence, so far so good.

With all these overwhelming good as well as useless thoughts coursing through my mind, I think of IMA and the limited skills we have as individuals and as a team. I almost panic. It is now 2:30 a.m.

Here are some commitments to make us at IMA uneasy. We have *Indian Missions*, a quarterly magazine that is always rushed, and I am always unhappy with the mistakes we continuously make. We try to produce some "interesting" IMA brochures, but the results are often unsatisfactory. We are trying to make a video of IMA's work, which so far has resulted in a major fiasco of scripts. Our research needs help. We are trying to upload information about member missions and IMA into our developing website, but we are pretty slow. I am not sure how well my teammates are coping with the demands or whether they understand the urgency. Should we continue to fire people who don't perform satisfactorily, or should we help them develop? Do we have the time

to fool around and dilly-dally in all that we are supposed to do? And where are the competent, dedicated men and women of God who will work for such a small amount—Rs. 6,000 per month—while they can fetch Rs. 16,000 in the market? With their Rs. 6,000 income, after paying a monthly house rent of 3,000, what else do they do with their salaries? Eat, pay insurance, spend on education for their children, pay for transportation, and have some entertainment, such as buying some good books to read or some music tapes for relaxation (why should they relax; they are supposed to be "dedicated" men and women of God!). How do they manage? Well, their wives can work, and the young children can look after themselves! What if the wife is not trained too much and/or cannot get a job? Ah! Should I go to sleep now? It is 2:45 a.m.

We have felt that many missions in India, which do not have a voice apart from their immediate region, must be helped in their needs, in the event of an emergency such as persecution, famine, and flood. So we have organized a Project Manager, who continuously receives project proposals and who serves as a liaison with prospective donors.

We have also organized many networks that are supposed to be serving the missions and interconnecting each other. There are prayer initiative networks, pastoral care networks for Christian workers and the CEOs, a Bible translation network, a leadership training network, a student mobilization network, a missiology network, a research network, a welfare network for Christian workers, and others. But we lack the time, the leaders, and the funds to get these networks moving. We are constantly saying that the church should be mobilized. But very few realize how big the task is and how small the church in India is. It is easier for a parochial group to scrounge for money from their constituencies, but this is hardly enough even to scratch the surface of the mammoth missions task. I roll over yet again in my bed and wonder how we could be better impacting India as a whole.

IMA has a vision to expand to Delhi, North East, and other places, because we want to be the uniting force among missions in the country. This desire is very legitimate. There have also been underlying fears that if we do not do the job, there will be several regional missions associations claiming their legitimacy and uniqueness—saying that they are more spiritual and are more focused for the global and local marketers. These groups are fine, but we will continue to fractionalize.

Now I consider the financial strength of IMA. This subject not only adds to my insomnia, but also makes my stomach acidic. The member missions give contributions of about 0.2% of their income. Most missions give the minimum—that is, Rs. 3,000. Most of these contributions, when combined, cover the existence of IMA for two to three months. The IMA staff also have to visit member missions, sort out many difficulties, represent them to many bodies inside and outside the country, run leadership training programs for the missions, keep in touch with the CEOs and with the emerging second generation of leaders in missions, guide the missions in the country, and be the consultants of Christian worker welfare for the missions. How do we do it?

The executive members of IMA have been very sympathetic, but what do we do? Shall I go to sleep now? It is 3:00 a.m.

Maintaining Perspective

The reason that I share this account with you is *not* that I am so frustrated that I want to quit. It is to ask you to pray, to understand the task ahead better, to stand with us in the ministry, and, for my colleagues, to learn to work together better. I write in case you are having trials similar to mine, to assure you that you are not alone. Many CEOs and other leaders have many similar sleepless nights. Yet there is a sense that God is in control in the midst of chaos. God is also at work in me and in you. Let Jesus be praised for the move-

ment of His Spirit among us. Yes, there are many dark obstacles in India, but His light is far brighter, turning the enemy's ploys into divine opportunities for His people. Let us not lose this crucial perspective!

Obstacles for Indian Missions

Christian workers face many obstacles, such as demonic forces and opposition from those who have chosen not to believe in Christ. There are also internal struggles. Some workers go to the mission field carrying many unwanted habits and significant unresolved issues from the past. Some struggle with a deep sense of insecurity or incompetence, the backlash of their family background, pressures from both their immediate family and their parents, peer pressure from friends, and the temptation to compromise to find an easier road in life. Thus, Christian workers have a tremendous task of disciplining themselves to become a special agent of the gospel. In the words of Marjorie Collins (1986, p. 25): "For some it is easy to adjust.... Others feel the whole adjustment is interesting.... But one thing that does not radically change is you. And because you have to live with you the rest of your life, it is well to consider some of the little things (and big things, too) in your personal life which can be or ought to be adapted, adjusted, deleted, or enhanced. And it is never too early to begin!"

One mission leader shared with me some of his struggles as a Christian worker and as a mission leader. What he is going through sounds so familiar! He has to find a balance between ministry and family, work and health care, personal relaxation and giving time to others in the mission, direct soul winning and leading a soul-winning agency, choosing priorities and non-priorities, being big-hearted and knowing that he was being taken advantage of, taking time off to evaluate himself and constantly working in ministry, having time with God and fulfilling work demands, and having the home and office together in the same house. Apart from all these stresses, he said there were financial struggles, especially following his marriage, together with the need for hospitality due to constant visitors.

Discouragement and Loneliness

The roots of discouragement are many. Poulose from Kerala was a Christian worker in Bihar. Being the only son in his house, he felt responsible to arrange the marriages of his two sisters. Heavy dowry burdens weighed him down with worries. In this situation, he found it hard to concentrate. Devan, a weaving technologist and now a Christian worker, was the first Christian in his family. He struggled to send Rs. 300 as a monthly remuneration to help his family. As an Indian, he is normally expected to provide for his parents' needs. He was constrained with a big responsibility and was reluctant to spend anything on himself beyond his own food expenses.

Some workers become discouraged when they have to live in primitive places, without modern equipment or facilities, in the midst of the computer and email age. The pressures to keep pace with new scientific developments and the new communication techniques challenge those working in cities and towns and with middle and upper class people.

Marjorie Collins (1986, p. 216) describes loneliness as "a fog which arrives out of nowhere to envelop the soul and cause it to feel lost or wayward.... If loneliness lasts for a long period of time, it erodes the ability to work well and produces a number of problems, both in relation to personal matters as well as in the area of ministry. Loneliness often turns to self-pity. [Christian workers] often carry burdens, many heartaches, and discouragement. Because of a fear of being misunderstood, very few ... speak of their difficulties."

Organizational Issues

There are also pressures within agencies in the form of difficult relationships with coworkers, poor leadership, clan-ruled authority structures, unorganized plans, and inadequate training for accomplishing the task. In the organizational structure, too much accountability is expected of some workers, while others are not required to be as accountable due to favoritism. These factors can kill the zeal of Christian workers over a period of time.

Even 40-year-old Christian workers can feel frustrated when senior members of the organization do not trust them because of their younger age. Young workers are forced to hear stories of how their elders have suffered, and so they should also expect to suffer and sacrifice, even though the times have changed. Yet sacrifice is an attitude of the heart. It cannot be forced upon people by legalisms. Thus, there has to be sensitivity in embracing the new ways, both in the area of technology and in adapting to a new generation of people in the mission, in order to enhance the work of missions.

When one worker was married, the mission insisted that the new wife quit her job, so as to help her husband in the ministry. The wife did not feel that she should give up a profession for which she was trained. She felt that she could serve the Lord by remaining in her profession. Eventually, the mission asked both the husband and the wife to resign. Such tension has been seen in many agencies.

Financial Issues

A prominent, well-educated, Christian leader in his mid-50s, who could have made it well in the secular world, could not make ends meet as a Christian worker. His children were very disappointed and felt that their parents were useless, because they could not provide many of the basic needs of the family. The parents, though prominent leaders, felt quite heartbroken. The whole family asked the same question, "Was this the right thing to have done with our lives?"

Another man, working with an unreached people group in the North, said that his mission, 10 years back, paid him a monthly salary of Rs. 400. After 10 years, he received around Rs. 1,000 a month. Financially he and his wife could not survive. Therefore, he resigned and left the mission. He wondered, "How has it come about that we use the noble name 'evangelist' for the lowest category of church worker—workers who are half-trained, half-paid, and half-starved? And how is it that respectable Christians feel uncomfortable with the very idea of evangelism?"

One particular mission has 87 workers, although it does not have a regular pay structure for them. Each worker was paid Rs. 200-300 per month. The workers struggled to survive. For example, living in a one-bedroom house in the North cost a man, his wife, and two school-aged children Rs. 4,000 per month in 1991. Today it would cost Rs. 4,000-6,000 in large cities and Rs. 6,000-10,000 in cosmopolitan cities and commercial townships (Daniel, 1997). Because of such financial pressure, many turn away from service and choose not to join mission work at all.

Medical Issues

M. C. Matthew (1995), a noted medical doctor in Vellore Christian Hospital, conducted an informal survey of two sending organizations. Many of the workers suffered from frequent illnesses. "There are some who experience exhaustion because of the nature of the work. The average age of [Christian workers interviewed] may be crossing 35 years, with at least 25% … in their mid-40s. This makes them vulnerable to illnesses of middle age like hypertension, diabetes, backaches, arthritis, acid-peptic disease, psychosomatic dysfunction, etc."

An important concern in Indian missions is the payment of major medical bills. Even many minor medical bills can mount up. Missions have many different methods to pay off the medical bills of their Christian workers. Most struggle with

the systems. There is no one system which is satisfactory.

Most Christian workers in India have no medical insurance, and when they fall ill they struggle to pay the bills. The mission agencies may be willing to pay the large bills, but they have no money to do so. The worker feels a burden to the mission when he falls ill. His own self-worth and security have deteriorated. This situation has to change. Workers should not feel that they are a burden to the agency, or this will affect their families, and eventually the children will never want to come back to the mission field. Not only the children, but also others who consider missions will hesitate when they know a worker is not taken care of adequately.

In the new Indian scene, the cost paid is too high for many Christian workers. The cost includes deficient medical care, insufficient salary, inadequate schooling facilities for children, meager retirement benefits, complete lack of housing for the future, and no provision for decent insurance coverage. Several workers that I have interviewed agreed that Christian workers did not have much savings nor any health insurance, retirement benefits, or death relief schemes. The consensus was that this state of affairs resulted from the false theology called "faith," until some disaster such as a heart attack struck. One man's wife became mentally ill, and the mission could not treat her because of the lack of funds. Eventually the man died, and his wife was left homeless.

Ongoing Educational and Spiritual Input

Christian workers need ongoing training and opportunities for personal growth and spiritual refreshment. The larger missions have been dealing with this situation, due to their size and recurring requests from their workers. They have also realized the value of investing in the lives of their workers as a part of enhancing their effectiveness and in preparation for future leadership. The leaders wisely envision expansion and the passing of the mantle to future generations. Thus, the aspect of studies at the midpoint of a Christian worker's life has consciously been planned.

The smaller missions struggle to provide such ongoing input. In general, this is because they have not experienced much numerical growth and have very limited funds. The workers have felt inadequate and worn out and have wanted to catch their breath. While the mission leaders have struggled and made positive and negative decisions, the workers have been caught in the middle, and some have become victims of delayed decisions or wrong decisions. The result is that Christian workers suffer from a lack of motivation and a sense of inadequacy.

Missions will have to cope with more and more people wanting to go for studies in the middle of their careers, to enhance their efficiency and improve their focus so as not to get into a perpetual rut. If such a provision is not made, then workers simply quit the mission and go to another mission which is able to help, or they give up Christian work altogether. Two or three years of mid-term training for workers are well worth considering, in light of the future 15-20 years of service.

Pension and Retirement Benefits

The issue of the future is not easy for any Christian worker of any nation if it is not planned well. The mission leaders, as part of pastoral care for their workers, should plan pension/retirement matters with their personnel and not avoid facing such weighty issues. There may not be easy answers, but they have to be found.

Slowly, the mission agencies are becoming aware of the needs of the Christian workers who will retire. Most workers do not feel comfortable living "in the shadows" of their children, as is the case for many Indians in the country. Very few of the present Christian workers have any income from ancestral properties. Thus, there have been anxieties both on their part and on the part of the mission. Cred-

ible mission agencies have been progressively aware of the pension needs of retiring workers to assure a regular income for these faithful servants. The workers who will retire in the next few years have not prepared for their retirement and pension. The younger workers have been encouraged to contribute money for a pension. The Executive Committee of IMA has requested that all IMA staff be put under a pension scheme as soon as possible to provide a regular income in the future. In the same way, many missions are planning to get into pension schemes.

The best years of a worker's life are spent in winning people to Christ, but when the person retires, he/she has nowhere to go. There is not any pension plan, or a house to live in, or a plot of land upon which to build a house. Patrick Joshua commented, "When a [Christian worker] retires, he has to live the rest of his life with dignity." Home is a place of rest and care, of belonging and security. A home for the Christian worker is a blessing, and it is not unspiritual to have a house.

Rev. Diraviam of the CSI diocese mentioned that this used to be a problem among the clergy also. Most retired bishops and pastors lived with their children in cities like Chennai. There were some who thought about housing for the clergy back in 1984. In 1991, a decision was made to buy a plot of land for the clergy at Chengelpet, 60 kilometers away from Chennai, but the program fell through. Coimbatore Diocese had a scheme. In the diocese compound itself the retired pastor could rent a house for a small amount until he passed away. However, Diraviam recognized the need for one's own house where the pastor's wife and children could continue to live. This could be worked out if, from the time the pastor entered ministry, a sum of Rs. 1,000 a month allocated for his housing could be set aside to get him a good house when he retired in 30 years' time. The allocated Rs. 1,000 a month could be used for a house built with a housing loan. A similar plan could be worked out for Christian workers also.

Children's Education

Many missions, especially the smaller ones, have made very little allowance for the education of the children. The problem increases when the children enter college for higher education. It is difficult to get the large sum of money needed for higher education. Some children, in the worst case scenarios, have reacted very negatively to this situation, resenting the "sacrifice" which parents/others have demanded of them.

Most parents who live in the city manage to keep their children with them, even though they might not get the full support needed for the city education of their children. But some parents have to send their children far away to a hostel. They have no choice, as there are insufficient funds for children to go to a closer but more expensive hostel or school. If only they had more funds, they would have preferred to have their children near their working place in a hostel where they could see them more often and where they felt comfortable with their children's education. The mission leaders must plan in such a way that the Christian workers are not coerced into sending their children only to the schools which the agencies recommend 1,000 kilometers away!

We must not lose the opportunity to invest in our children. They deserve good care and a good education if they are to grow and positively impact their society. Further, if the children of Christian workers are neglected, neither they nor others who may consider mission work will likely come into the missions.

Persecution

There has been some persecution in India for Christians in the past few years. Houses have been burned, people have been forced to move, and there have been some deaths. However, the persecution is not as much as in Indonesia and other parts of the world. It comes largely from

some religious fanatics who are opposed to the idea of the equality of human beings and who believe in the superiority of their religion. The minority religions in India are still largely considered "foreign." Christianity is especially seen as being Western and an attempt to "colonize" the religion and culture. These fanatics, like many others, erroneously believe that the Hollywood culture, as portrayed in the media, is in fact the Christian culture. Thus Christianity is perceived as a threat to the integrity and unity of India as a Hindu nation.

Another factor affecting the persecution scenario is that mission efforts have mostly impacted tribal groups rather than the "thinkers and influencers" of the country. Thus, when the fanatics verbally or physically assault Christians, the secular thinkers do not support Christians. In fact, often the Indian political parties make use of the accounts of persecution for their own advantage, rather than sympathizing with those being persecuted.

Persecution has a psychological effect on Christian workers, with ongoing fear being a major result. The IMA tries to help in any way possible when there is persecution. This includes practical support and care. The IMA also tries to encourage Christian workers to communicate the gospel to the whole of India, not just to certain groups, and to do so in culturally appropriate ways. We hope that this approach will produce more sympathizers (not to mention more disciples of Christ, of course!), who will at least view Christ and His teachings positively. Nonetheless, when the uniqueness of Jesus is being proclaimed as the only way to salvation, many will be offended, and persecution can ensue, a historical fact for both India and many other parts of the world.

Opportunities for Member Care and the Gospel

Christians need systematically to care for their workers who carry the good news of Christ to all. Workers need training to give them good tools. They need care to relate to their own coworkers. They need to provide adequately for family needs, including their children's education. Preparation for crises and for possible persecution is necessary. Christian workers also need a good salary comparable to the normal secular ones, accompanied by planning for their housing and pension after their retirement. A large percent of the success of the mission depends on the care we give to workers. A good strategy for the work is not the only reason for the mission's success. Care of the worker and strategy go hand in hand.

In the IMA, we realize that India will never hear about and respond to Christ unless there is healthy care of Christian workers. Therefore, the need of member care for Christian workers has become critical in order to take the gospel forward. The leaders of the IMA have organized member care-related seminars and consultations and have written on several pastoral care topics concerning Christian workers, the CEOs, and leaders; families of Christian workers and their children; and the medical/financial welfare of Christian workers. There have been networks established on member care, counseling, welfare, children's education, and others. We are thus doing our best to raise the profile and awareness of member care.

The IMA in particular has held several meetings for people involved in different aspects of pastoral care, from rest/renewal home directors to psychiatrists involved in missions. The idea is to help member care workers link together and develop complementary roles in caring for Christian workers. We hope that member care departments within organizations will be created/strengthened, that regional care centers will be formed, that additional rest/renewal houses will be set up, and that there will be a greater understanding of the ongoing needs of Christian workers.

A network of member care centers/hubs is also key. Since India is so vast and diverse, with the mission agencies and

workers being geographically so spread out, we will need many centers which will cater to Christian workers from their regions. This is not to abdicate the role of each mission in caring for its own people, but rather it is a complement to what the missions are already doing/developing. Many times, agencies need outside specialist support—for example, when there are cases of severe mental disorder, physical disorders affecting health and mind, and special educational and behavioral issues for children. Specialists located at or associated with such centers could help immensely.

The IMA, in conjunction with other groups, is working to help develop an ethos of member care within missions today. We want to support mission leaders and sending groups as they care for their people. Our approach is becoming more proactive, and there are many opportunities which we believe the Lord is giving us. We fully expect to see Christian workers become more effective as we work together to nurture them and their families for the long haul. And we fully expect a splendid harvest of people for the Lord as a result of commitment and care for Christian workers.

Reflection and Discussion

1. The author lists many struggles for Indian Christian workers. Which ones relate the most to your context?

2. In what ways can these obstacles be turned into opportunities for the kingdom of God? Give a few examples.

3. In what ways can these obstacles actually obliterate Christian missions? Give a few examples.

4. Where can leaders go to find help for some of their struggles, such as the types of personal issues that the author recounts at the beginning of the article?

5. How does your organization provide for the member care needs of its personnel? Also describe how member care is part of the organization's thinking/ethos.

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Appendix
Some Member Care Resources in India

We believe the Lord is giving us understanding and opportunities for raising the quality of life for Christian workers. One of the main ways for us is to create a network of partners who could help in different aspects of the pastoral care for these workers. Here are some of the member care resources of people and places available in India. This is not an exhaustive list, and we hope that additions will be made to it in the days ahead as the network grows.

We are in the process of creating web pages to describe these and other member care resources. For further information, contact my wife, Pramila Rajendran, at: IMA, 48, First Main Road, East Shenoy Nagar, Chennai 600 030, India. Tel: (0)44-6444602/6444603/6448944/6448945; Fax: (0)44-6442859; Email: rajpramila@eth.net or imahq@vsnl.com.

Counselors and Places for Care

- Mr. Samson Gandhi, Person-to-Person (PP), Hyderabad, Andra Pradesh.
- Dr. Gnanamuthu, Counselling Centre at Bangalore, Karnataka.
- Mr. John Zechariah, Grace Counselling Centre, Kerala.
- Mr. Marcus Chacko and Mr. Alfy Franks, Pastoral Care Department, OM, Hyderabad, AP.
- Christian Medical College, Pastoral Care Department, Vellore, Tamil Nadu.
- Dr. M. C. and Annie Mathew, Christian Medical College, Vellore, Tamil Nadu.
- Noor Manzil Hospital, Lucknow, UP.

- South Asia Institute for Advanced Christian Studies, Bangalore (counseling course).
- Mr. and Mrs. Tim and Carol Svoboda, YWAM, Chennai, Tamil Nadu (member care course).
- Mr. and Mrs. Rod and Ruth Gilbert, Corner Stone, Mahapalipuram, Chennai (counseling in marriage and family).
- Dr. and Mrs. Theodore and Dianna Srinivasagam, IMA, Bangalore, Karnataka.
- Rev. and Mrs. J. N. Manokaran, India Missions Association, Chennai.
- Mrs. and Mr. Kasturba and Hansraj Jain (marriage seminars/counselors; also involved with home schooling for MKs in Nagpur, Maharastra).
- Dr. and Mrs. Bijoy and Premi Koshy, InterServe, Delhi.
- Mr. Ravi David, Scripture Gift Missions, Bangalore, Karnataka.
- Mr. John Amalraj, India Missions Association, Delhi.
- Mrs. Joyce Joshi, India Missions Association, Delhi.
- Rev. Sushanto Patra, National Fellowship, Calcutta, West Bengal.
- Dr. Rajesh Agarwal, RSP, Barreilly, UP.
- Mr. Augustine Jebakumar, GEMS, Dehri-on-sone, Bihar.
- Mrs. Pramila Rajendran, India Missions Association, Chennai, Tamil Nadu.
- Miss Evangeline Stanley, Blessing Youth Mission, Vellore, Tamil Nadu.
- Mrs. and Mr. Sneha Lata and David, Lucknow, UP (marriage counselors/seminars).
- Mr. and Mrs. Ray and Christa Eicher, Shanti Kunj, Landour, Mussorie, UP (a place for MKs to come and relax and share their problems; some families also come).
- Dr. Daniel Sathiaraj, India Missions Association, Hyderabad.
- Mr. James Kaiser, India Missions Association, Chennai.
- Mr. Chacko Thomas, OM, UK.
- Mr. Ashok Kumar, India Ministries, Singapore.
- Mr. J. J. Rathnakumar, MUT, Vellore, Tamil Nadu.
- Mr. David Meengs, Biblical Counselling Trust India, R. A. Puram, Chennai.

Some Guest Houses and Retreat Centers

- Deodars Retreat Centre, Mussorie, UP.
- Landour Guest House, Mussorie, UP.
- Rod and Ruth Gilbert, Corner Stone, S.U. Mahapalipuram, Chennai.
- Scripture Union Camp Centre, Mahapalipuram, Chennai.
- J. J. Rathnakumar, MUT Rest House, Vellore, Tamil Nadu.
- Mr. and Mrs. Wilson, Brookland Guest House and Retreat, Koonoor, Nilgiris, Tamil Nadu.
- Mountaben Guest House, Ooty, Tamil Nadu.

***K. Rajendran**, a pioneer Christian worker and trainer, has been in Christian leadership both in India and abroad. Originally from Tamil Nadu, he has 30 years of experience in missions with over 25 years in Operation Mobilization. Currently he is the General Secretary of the India Missions Association, one of the largest mission associations in the world, representing over 25,000 Christian workers to other peoples. Rajendran is married to Pramila, who has a master's degree in counseling and is also actively involved in member care. Rajendran earned his doctorate in missiology from the South Asia Institute for Advanced Christian Studies at Bangalore. He is an Executive Committee member of the WEA Missions Commission.*
Email: rajendranwwf@eth.net.

Note: The India Missions Association is the national federation of missions in India, which assists missions and churches in the proclamation of the gospel and in making disciples of Christ among the various unreached peoples, languages, and postal codes. IMA members partner to share resources, research, and training, and they are committed to accountability and care of their personnel. IMA today has 141 missions and evangelistic organizations in its membership, representing over 25,000 Christian workers, who work in about 1,500 locations across India and in 10 other nations beyond India.

9

Field Care For Asian Missionaries In South Asia

AH KIE LIM

In recent years, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of Asian missionaries working at home and abroad. How do we care for the new and growing wave of Asians who are counting the cost to take the gospel to the unreached? This chapter reviews five areas of need, focusing on the situation in South Asia: finances, singles, families, children's education, and vacation/home leave. Several suggestions are offered for meeting the challenges of care in this immense and diverse region.

Being a missionary on the field is an enormous challenge that cannot be taken lightly. My interest in working in the member care area began out of a desire to see the missionaries in my organization fulfilled in their ministry. I had seen missionaries begin to lose their enthusiasm for their ministry after a number of years on the mission field. This is not to say that they had lost their call or their love for the unreached. Rather, there seemed to be some underlying struggles and stresses that made them want to give up. My desire was to help them run the race so that they might finish well (1 Cor. 9:24).

Asians tend to view member care very differently from their Western counterparts. Asian churches and mission organizations are often afraid that "too much" care from them will "spoil" their missionaries. Some are even of the philosophy that missionaries should be willing to suffer all for Jesus and for the sake of carrying the gospel. "There are others that believe too much care can become a distraction and ultimately make workers less resilient and effective" (O'Donnell & O'Donnell, 1992, p. 13). Because of this mindset, Asian churches and mission organizations are very cautious when giving care to their missionaries. Missionaries who genuinely need care are afraid to ask, because they could be branded as "not self-sacrificial in their ministry" or, even worse, "not fit to be on the mission field." Often they live with unmet needs and suffer disappointments with their mission organizations or sending churches.

It is a challenge to know exactly what should be considered as adequate member care for such a diverse group. The needs of Asian missionaries are very different from those of Western missionaries or those from the Middle East or Latin America. How or where does one even begin?

What I write in this article is the result of some of the successes and failures from providing care for our missionaries who are on the frontlines working as church planters among the unreached peoples of South Asia. Many of the issues faced by our national missionaries are also common for Asians working in other Asian countries. Working in South Asia, as a Malaysian, has challenged me to look at different ways to provide better care for Asian missionaries in general.

Issues Faced by National Asian Missionaries

Stress of Financial Needs

"My wife has been sick for two years, and we do not have enough money for her to seek better treatment. We barely have enough monthly financial support to meet our family needs," says one missionary. Some workers do not have enough money to travel to their ministry locations if they are working in several villages. "In many of the prayer meetings, the missionaries pray for their financial needs to be met. If they waited for all their needs to be met, India and the world would never be reached with the gospel" (Rajendran, 1998, p. 108). These workers took a step of faith and trusted that God would indeed meet all their needs. "We need to realize that the lack of money is just as definitely from God as the provision of money" (Cunningham, 1991, p. 51). So the basic perspective, for better or worse, is that the lack of finances should never deter or stop us from serving God.

When we visit our church planters in their ministry locations, we are constantly confronted by the reality of their financial needs. These are genuine needs. Some of them do not have enough finances to send their children to school or have regular monthly support to meet their family necessities. How I wish I had answers to their dilemmas! The ideal would be for the sending churches to offer financial support, yet some churches in South Asia are not in a position to support themselves, let alone a missionary from their church. Some of these churches are also hesitant to support missionaries who are working with parachurch organizations.

A common expectation is that the sponsoring church or mission will financially provide for the missionary, but there is often a problem with asking for such support. Asian missionaries often have a mentality that to ask for money for their monthly support is equal to begging. They believe that if God has called them, then He will provide. One missionary told me that she had no problem raising money for others but not for herself. It is much easier to speak for the needs of someone else than to tell the church of one's own needs. In the Asian culture, it can be shameful to ask money for oneself, but it is an honor to help someone else raise support.

In our organization, we are working closely with our church planting teams to help them with income-generating projects to earn income for themselves. Some of these small businesses are making Indian pickles, greeting cards, etc. These micro-enterprises allow our workers to be more independent of outside support, as well as being a testimony to the community. We are in no way saying that we do not trust God to provide for all of our needs or that the sending churches/agencies do not need to take more responsibility for missionaries' support. But we need to be creative with whatever means we have, in order that we might continue to stay on the field. The Apostle Paul himself was a tentmaker, working to support himself in the ministry (Acts 18:1-3).

We also help workers raise support from other interested organizations and their local sending churches. A key to this effort is writing and visiting their pastors in order to build relationships. We also help missionaries write prayer letters to people who are looking to support missionaries but do not know whom to support.

Recently we were able to network with a South Asian organization called Missionary Upholders Family (MUF). This organization links missionaries with individuals and families who are interested in supporting missionaries. The interested group will then adopt a missionary and pray for that person and his/her work. The MUF group also supports the missionary financially each month. This involvement is a positive sign that South Asian churches and Christians are taking part in reaching the lost with the gospel through their giving and prayers. The India Missions Association has also published a timely book called *Management of Indian Missions* (Sunder Raj et al., 1998). A chapter is dedicated to helping missionaries save money by showing the different savings plans that are available in India.

Single Men and Women on the Mission Field

To be single in the South Asian context can sometimes bring shame both on the individual and on his/her immediate family. For example, sometimes single men and women are not respected in the communities where they are working. Workers are only considered "adults" if they are married and have the responsibility of taking care of a family of their own, thus demonstrating that they are able to handle life. For parents, the marriage of their children means that they have done their duty as parents. For a woman, marriage means that her future is secure, with someone to care for her. For a man, it means that his position is secure, with recognized authority.

Arranged marriages are common in the Asian culture. One young woman in our mission was asked by her family members to leave the ministry, because they had arranged a life partner for her. She felt obligated to submit, even though the proposed husband was not a believer. This cultural norm may seem strange and even repulsive to cultures that believe in individual freedom to choose a life partner. In many South Asian cultures, though, matchmaking is an area that mission organizations need to take into account, and possibly, although arguably, it is a role they should provide for their missionaries.

Mission organizations in many ways act as parents to the single missionaries in their organization. This can include looking for a life partner for them. It is a big step for single missionaries to leave their homes and serve on the mission field. For many, it involves a form of "giving up their family" and belonging to another one. In this case, they become a part of the "family" in the organization where they are working. I believe that as mission agencies look after the future life partner of their single missionaries, these workers will not be forced by their families to return home to get married. One idea is that mission agencies could partner with other mission agencies and act as "marriage bureaus" for their missionaries. This is a need especially for the frontline missionaries, who face the shame of being single in the community where they are working and who also receive pressure from their non-Christian families to be married.

Aside from the usual struggles of feeling alone and not fulfilled, single missionaries who are working in South Asia need to be careful in relating to members of the opposite sex. Men and women in this culture do not mix freely in public, and to do so raises great suspicion. "Living in a marriage-oriented society poses peculiar problems for singles" (Foyle, 1987, p. 29). Can a person be in ministry and still be single in a society that looks at marriage as the norm for everyone? One solution is that in our mission we work in teams, with both singles and married couples working alongside each other. The married couples provide a "covering" for the singles, which is accepted in the South Asian context. In this way, one can reasonably mix without the fear of being questioned or frowned upon.

Family Commitment

"My parents are old and they need my help, as there is no one at home who can

take care of them. I am afraid that I have to leave the mission field, although this is not my choice." "I am the oldest son in my family. It is my duty to care for my parents. I have to earn enough money to take care of them and my younger brothers and sisters." These issues are very common in Asian cultures, where children are expected to care for their family. It is considered a dishonor to the parents if their children do not care for them in their old age. Honoring parents includes providing for their material needs. I have seen many missionaries leave the mission field because their parents needed their help. Are we to abandon our parents for what we or others may perceive as the "higher" calling that God has for us? This is a tough decision that most Asian missionaries have to face and answer.

I believe that we can find some alternative solutions. For example, is there a place on the mission field for parents? In one case, a missionary's mother moved to the field location to live with her son and his family. There, she was able to help care for the grandchildren, thus freeing both parents to continue their work.

In another case, one of our national missionaries had to raise extra monthly support to provide for his parents. His parents released him to the mission field, but they were not financially independent. His Western coworkers did not understand why he gave money to his parents when he did not have enough for himself. Another missionary gives monthly support to her parents primarily out of respect and honor to them. I believe that helping to provide for the parents of missionaries will not only bless the parents, but will show the community that we practice what we preach. If we want to see more Asian missionaries released into the mission field, mission agencies need to make room for changes in policies, such as having parents of missionaries joining their offspring in the field. The question is, are we ready for such radical changes? Is this also part of our call to mission?

Children's Education

Many missionaries wrestle with schooling options for their children. For Asian missionaries, the concern is often that they do not have the money to send their children to school. "Some missions have no money earmarked for children's education, and thus children and parents suffer. The struggle has at times made the missionaries leave mission work" (Rajendran, 1998, p. 114). There is no easy solution. A large percentage of missionary children are not able to pursue higher studies due to either poor social skills, lack of finances, or lack of access to schools or colleges near where the missionaries are working. "We cannot neglect the education of the children of the missionaries, as they are an integral part of their parents' ministry. One of the reasons why missionaries leave the field is because of the education of their children" (Jones, 1995, p. 101).

There are a number of boarding schools that are available for the children of national missionaries in Asia. The issue here is not just the type of boarding schools that are available but the costs involved. In an international volunteer organization like ours, there is room for partnership in helping Asian missionaries to raise support for the education of their children. We have churches that adopt and support missionaries. I believe it is time for us to explore the idea of "adopting" the education of missionaries' children. This will ease the burden of the missionaries, and they will be able to concentrate on their ministry. Inter-mission agencies need to work together in this area to find a better solution to help provide better education for the children of our national missionaries. As member care providers, we can assist our missionaries and our organizations in finding available resources.

Vacation and Home Leave

Vacation and home leave for many means going to a beach resort or another

nice place for rest and refreshment. Such breaks are necessary, and they help missionaries return to the field ready to continue. One Indian missionary told me that it is so nice that the foreign missionaries are able to take a vacation or go on home leave, but she has nowhere to go nor the funds to do so. For her to take a holiday means going to stay with her non-Christian family, which is not a conducive place to rest. For some missionaries who are from non-Christian backgrounds, going home for a holiday might mean having to endure idol worship in the home and the rituals associated with it. One of our missionaries is mocked by her family members each time she goes home, because she chose to be a missionary. For others, going home really is a holiday. One man gets to be spoiled by his mother's cooking and watch television when he goes home. After a week of these luxuries, he is refreshed and ready to get back to work.

The ministry of hospitality can provide vacation alternatives for missionaries. As member care providers, we can periodically open our homes to frontline workers who need a break. These individuals may not have the finances to take a holiday, but for them to leave their location for a week and be "spoiled" by member care providers can be most refreshing. Another example was when a group of my friends raised some money and sent me on a holiday. Their generosity blessed me and gave me the desire to do the same for other missionaries who are isolated and need a break. Finally, mission agencies could seriously consider opening mission guest houses that are affordable and easily available, designed especially for Asian missionaries.

Other Suggestions for Practical Member Care

As the number of missionaries grows, so also does the need for more member care providers. This is especially true for the teams that are working in remote or sensitive areas. These places are not easy to get to on a regular basis. In some sensitive locations, though, to have an "outsider" visiting the team may attract more attention and raise suspicion. In such areas, the member care providers are not allowed to visit the team. What do we do in situations like these? Here are some strategies:

Further Training

Missionaries are often so busy with their work that they do not take the time to receive personal input. Some of them do not have the funds to do so, or the sending churches do not see the need. A friend told me that he had been on the mission field for 10 years without a study break or an opportunity to receive teaching input into his life. What missed opportunities! Our need for ongoing learning, be it formal or non-formal, stays with us as long as we live.

Member care providers can play a part in helping missionaries to find a training location or options for training. This does not necessarily mean that they must leave their field location for an extended period of time. There are a number of institutes that provide distance learning for those who are motivated. In our organization, we have numerous training programs that are three months long. These programs enable missionaries to have a short break from the field and at the same time receive input into their lives. We also make available ongoing training that lasts for a week, designated for our frontline church planters. The ongoing training is held twice a year, thus enabling the missionaries to put into practice what they have learned. At the same time, they are refreshed spiritually and physically by the break in routine.

I believe that we can learn from corporations who seek to increase the productivity of their company by sending their workers for further training on a regular basis. The company's purpose is to motivate and upgrade their workers. It is a good investment, in hope that the workers will bring more quality and productiv-

ity to the company. We have a number of good examples from the business world concerning the management and care of personnel. Company staff are given good incentives, often with big bonuses and attractive vacation packages. Yet in Christian organizations, sometimes we are not even willing to send our workers for more training to be further equipped. This must change!

Ongoing Member Care

Field visits

One missionary said that no one had visited him in the four years he had been on the field. On occasion, he and his team did receive letters from their field office, but that was all. When I first heard about this state of affairs, I was saddened, and I was reminded that most sending mission agencies and sending churches do not visit their missionaries on a regular basis. This is not to say that they are at fault or do not care for their missionaries. The distance, travel time to remote areas, and finances make such visits difficult.

Nevertheless, contact between member care providers and missionaries is crucial for the effectiveness of frontline missionaries. On his missionary journeys, the Apostle Paul never failed to encourage the believers wherever he went. His is a good example to follow. As member care providers in our organization, we set up a regular schedule to visit each church planting team on location at least once a year. We also bring our missionaries to a central location for further training, refreshment, and refueling two or three times a year. In this way, the missionaries are not left alone too long without outside contact and input.

Tapes

Phil Parshall's (1988, p. 75) article, "How Spiritual Are Missionaries?" gives a sobering insight into the spiritual state of some missionaries. Devotional time and prayer life, Parshall found, are often short and inconsistent. I believe that member care providers can help meet some of the spiritual needs of missionaries by sending good Bible teaching tapes. In addition to visiting our teams, we also send them teaching tapes or articles each month. These servants give out so much, and they need renewing and refueling. One of our team leaders thanked me a few years ago for sending teaching tapes and teaching notes to his team. He said that as a team they wait eagerly each month for these materials. They listen to the tapes as a team and then discuss them at length. The team leader files all the teaching notes he receives and occasionally uses them as a tool to teach new believers.

Cards

It is so important to remember the birthdays and wedding anniversaries of missionaries. "My wife was ready to quit and go home because she felt so alone and was very discouraged. She began to wonder if anybody really cared. That same day when she was ready to quit, she received a birthday card from a member care team. Just a simple card encouraged her so much, and she began to have a change in attitude towards people and her work." Don't underestimate the blessing that a card or a letter can have. It communicates loud and clear that others—friends—really care. And anyone can send a card or write a letter!

Prayer

Workers on the frontlines need to be surrounded with prayer. Member care providers can be a channel to raise prayer support, especially for church planting teams who are isolated without many outside contacts. We can link the teams with churches, interest groups, and resources to support them in prayer. A few churches and interest groups have contacted us and have expressed a keen interest in praying for South Asia. As member care providers, we have written to these groups and have suggested a few teams for them to choose from. We have had the joy of linking a number of our church planting teams with

interest groups who will stand alongside our workers in prayer as well as in some financial support.

Members Caring for Each Other

Missionaries are great sources of mutual care, especially in isolated areas. Barry Austin (1992, p. 60) in his article, "Supporting Missions Through Pastoral Care," wrote that in difficult settings we need to find creative ways to support our people. He said that ultimately the primary resource for care rests with those who are actually working together. We need each other for support and growth. In Hebrews 10:24, we are encouraged to spur each other to love and good works. We encourage our teams to find a prayer partner with someone from their team or outside. We also encourage them to find someone to whom they can be accountable personally and spiritually, in addition to their team leader. Regular fun time, outings, and sharing of meals are some of the team-building activities that we encourage our teams to maintain.

Area Member Care Providers

Missionaries in our organization are located all over South Asia. The vast area makes it a real challenge for member care providers to assure adequate care. To deal with this geographic reality, we have set up a program for training area member care personnel in different regions. They are thus physically located closer to the church planters. These member care providers are appointed by their leaders, and they receive ongoing training at least once a year from the main member care department in Pune, India. Our goal is for each church planting team to have a member care provider that is close to their ministry location, and especially to train Asian member care providers.

Although we have the burden and the heart to care for our missionaries, we still lack the "professional" training. This includes the areas of counseling, mental health professionals, crisis care, and others, as discussed in an article by Richard and Laura Mae Gardner (1992, p. 315), "Training and Using Member Care Workers." I would especially like to see member care providers be better equipped in crisis care and mental health counseling. The current political atmosphere in the Asian region raises the need for us to be prepared for the crises that could arise.

National and International Member Care Partnerships

Member care is not the work of one organization or church but the ministry of the body of Christ providing care for all of our missionaries. We in South Asia are still at the beginning stages of working together with agencies, both nationally and internationally. There is a great need for more networking between agencies, churches, and other mission organizations.

During the past few years, our organization has been able to partner with a few national mission agencies. We have been able to share resources and counselors, as well as provide counseling and crisis care training for our member care workers. Member care forums have been organized to provide a place for member care personnel to meet each other, discuss issues, and share resources and ideas. The India Missions Association has set up a member care consultation group to meet the growing needs of Indian missionaries. Our organization is part of this group. We have the joy of inviting one of the members of the consultation group to teach at our training program. Our member care workers have also attended some of the member care training programs that are offered by other mission organizations. We are young, but we are on the right track.

Conclusion

In closing, I would like to encourage Asian and especially South Asian member care providers to embrace the call to nurture the missionaries that are being raised up by God. But we must do this together.

The challenges and needs are before us. At times they may seem overwhelming, but we have a great God who enables those who trust in Him.

Reflection and Discussion

1. In what ways does your mission organization practically support single missionaries? How important is finding a life partner for your missionaries?

2. What types of provisions are made for the parents of missionaries in your organization? What would it take for a missionary from your culture to return to be with his/her parents?

3. How does your organization help with the financial needs of missionaries, especially those from Newer Sending Countries? Are income-generating projects viable options?

4. What are some of the needs that member care providers have? How does your organization care for the caregivers?

5. In what ways could networking with other groups further support your missionaries? How could other groups benefit from partnering with you?

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Ah Kie Lim *is from Malaysia and has been working with Youth With A Mission for 16 years. Her main focus is providing member care for church planters working in South Asia. She has pioneered and directed the member care ministry in YWAM South Asian frontier missions for the past seven years. Ah Kie is currently working on her M.Div. at Fuller Theological Seminary in California. Email: ahkie@pqsa.net.*

10

Member Care For African Mission Personnel

Naomi Famonure

Africa is a fascinating continent, rich in natural resources and abounding in cultural diversity. It is also a continent which wrestles with incapacitating problems: widespread HIV/AIDS, poverty, war, famine, financial and government corruption, and minimal infrastructures for health care and social services. In the midst of its beauty and its bleakness, the Lord is stirring the church to raise up and send out mission workers. As with any new mission movement, the African sending groups are having to come to terms with the need for ongoing supportive resources to sustain their workers. This chapter addresses some of the current realities in African missions, focusing on some of the main needs and resources for member care.

Africa is geographically vast with great ethnic diversity. It has over 50 countries and covers an area of about 30,000,000 square kilometers. The population is about 650,000,000, or roughly 10% of the world's population. Africa is the continent with the highest growth rate. It is estimated that by 2025, Africa will be home to over 15% of the world's people. Africa has over 3,000 ethno-linguistic people groups who speak at least 1,995 languages. There are four main and official languages: English in 22 countries, French in 18 countries, Spanish in four countries, and Portuguese in one country. Six countries use an African language as their official national language.

Africa has an abundance of natural and human resources, yet no other continent in the world has suffered such a series of natural, political, and economic disasters. Food production over the past 30 years has been on the decline and has been unable to keep pace with the rapid population growth. As a result, several places on the continent have had and still suffer from acute famine. As rich and well-endowed as this continent is, 32 of the 40 poorest nations in the world are there. Africa generates only 1.2% of the world's total earnings. Other factors affecting the African economy include corrupt government policies, foreign debts, and unending senseless wars that have claimed millions of innocent lives.

Into this context, the African church has, in spite of the odds, continued to forge forward sacrificially. Much has happened to God's glory, through both African and non-African mission personnel. But as we look at how the work has been done, we see the lamentable need to have managed our human resources better. Thankfully, I believe this situation is changing.

For example, the Association of Evangelicals of Africa (AEA) was founded in 1966 with the purpose of "fostering unity and cooperation among evangelicals in Africa for the furtherance of God's kingdom." The AEA at the initial stages began two commissions that have helped make a difference: the Theological and Christian Education Commission (TCEC) and the Evangelism and Missions Commission (EMC). The TCEC straightway founded two theological institutions for the purpose of training ministers and other Christian workers. The EMC initiated a missions training program and also began helping churches and mission agencies to develop their own missions training programs.

With this background in mind, we now approach the subject of member care of African mission personnel. I will look at training and selection issues, family and MK issues, MK education, physical health, spiritual warfare, and some ways forward for African missions. The various case studies that I use are all true, although the names mentioned are fictitious.

Training and Selection

Indigenous mission societies that sprang up as offshoots of Western missionary efforts in Africa either saw little need for relevant missionary training or did not have the know-how to prepare their staff adequately before sending them out to the mission field. The practice was to send everybody who had a call for ministry—regardless of the nature of the ministry—to a Bible school for training, where available. In most cases, the students of the Bible schools and seminaries were equipped for pastoral work in organized church denominations, rather than in the rugged missionary work which the African mission field demands. The effect was that Christian workers who were trained in Bible schools plunged into missions and were ill equipped for the challenges they faced on the field.

A large denominational church in the central African region was jolted into the practical reality of the need for effective pastoral care. One of its trusted, proven, and reliable workers was sent out as a missionary but had to return home, devastated, broken, and possibly never to go back to the field. Recently, a member of the mission board was asked to attend the AEA/EMC Member Care Consultation that took place in Cameroon in July 2001 (described more fully later). As you can imagine, the board member was very eager to learn more about member care, and he brought back many insights into what needs to be done to sustain missionaries on the field. He told me that this missionary had never received any form of training to prepare him and his family for what they would face on the field. It was assumed that he was sufficiently prepared, since he had known the Lord and served in the church as a worker for years. That was a costly mistake.

Another participant at the consultation, from a French-speaking country, recalled with sadness how he had gone through Bible school training without ever having been asked at the point of entry if he had been born again or had had a conversion experience in the Lord Jesus Christ. The choice of students enrolled for training in that denomination in preparation for ministry, including missionary work, was never based on a conversion experience or on a conviction of a call into ministry. In some denominations, it is based on the pastor's recommendation (who was trained through the same process) and on the candidate's educational qualifications. Depending on his qualifications, a candidate, after training, is either employed as a pastor with a parish or as an evangelist to assist the pastor, or he is posted to a remote village for church planting. In many parts of Africa, pastoral ministry is regarded with the highest esteem, but in general this is not the case with missions ministry.

The new sending agencies in Africa, mostly from the Pentecostal background as a result of the charismatic revival in the institutions of higher learning, were mod-

eled after the faith missions of the early European missions. These African missions, like their predecessors, did not grasp the need for training or for the patient, careful selection of the missionary candidates. Many of these new sending agencies were being led by directors who themselves did not go through any form of training to prepare and equip them for their work, especially in cross-cultural settings. Most agencies did not require any form of training, but rather saw the training period as a waste of time, while souls were perishing in heathen lands. They felt that all that missionaries needed was a knowledge of the Bible, to be able to tell sinners that Jesus loves them and that He came to save them from their sins. Armed with this Bible knowledge, Christian workers moved out in faith.

Out of zeal to send many hundreds of workers to mission fields in and around Africa, some agencies have recruited indiscriminately, without reference to individual qualifications or the home church and without relevant missionary training. Many missionaries have gone out not only without the necessary skills, but also without adequate field supervision, mentoring, and appropriate care. In fact, in some cases missionaries went out by themselves to unreached and very difficult areas.

This approach has done more harm than good. Some of these untrained missionaries crashed woefully and returned home broken. Others who managed to weather the storms and who stayed on "spoiled" the work and shut the door to subsequent mission efforts among the people groups they served.

Positive Changes

After many faltering steps, the mission enterprise in Africa over the years has looked back in retrospect to see the "potholes" into which they stumbled and fell, and they have taken far-reaching measures in ensuring that the mistakes of the past are corrected. At least in the areas of training and selection, many mission agencies are now not only looking into the area of relevant cross-cultural training, but they are also seeking to work with church leaders to ensure that the right people are selected, trained, sent out to the field, and supported. Working together, churches are now relying on the recommendations of the training institutions to determine whether or not candidates are suitable, the type of ministry in which they will likely be most effective, and whether or not they are likely to thrive in a pioneering situation. It is a slow process, because some African church pastors do not yet see missions as the priority of the church, but we are progressing!

The EMC of AEA initiated a missionary training program in the early 1990s called the School of Missions Eastern Region (SOMER), in which key trainers were further equipped to go back to their home countries to start schools of missions. At least 18 missionaries were trained to be trainers. This was very effective, and as a result of the EMC initiative, many schools of missions sprang up. African sending countries are putting a lot of effort now into training their missionaries and especially into preparing and equipping them for the harsh realities of the African mission fields. For instance, the main sending countries, such as Nigeria, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, South Africa, and Kenya, now have training schools for missions. Here are some examples:

- Agape School of Missions for Training in Discipleship and Missions – Nigeria
- Calvary Ministries (CAPRO) School of Missions – Nigeria
- Nigerian Evangelical Missionary Institute (NEMI) – Nigeria
- Christian Missionary Foundation – Nigeria
- Foursquare School of Missions – Nigeria
- Sheepfold Ministries Missions Training – Kenya
- Africa Inland Missionary Training – Kenya
- World Mission Center – South Africa

- Ecole de Mission Inter-Africain au Benin – Republic of Benin
- Adonai International Missions School – Central African Republic (CAR)
- CERFEM – Chad
- Ghana Evangelical Missionary Institute – Ghana

The development of better training, to some extent, has served to reduce the occupational hazards of African missions. Churches with genuine and authentic missionary thrusts, which have hitherto used only their Bible schools to prepare their missionaries, have been able to take advantage of these new missions training centers to better train and equip their workers.

In August 1996, the AEA TCEC and the EMC jointly organized a workshop on missions training in Africa, held in Jos, Nigeria. Those who were invited to attend were theologians, primarily from accredited theological schools, along with missionaries involved in training from 10 different African countries and the United Kingdom. The workshop centered on the need for integration between missions and theology. It emphasized that in order for Africans to be won to the Lord Jesus Christ, "It is not only necessary to encourage enthusiastic Africans into missions, but also to give them solid, biblically based theological foundations for that mission." A careful look at the curriculum of the theological institutions in Africa revealed that in most cases they did not reflect what could be considered an adequate program of missions and missionary training, even though "the spread of the gospel" frequently forms a part of the mission statements of these institutions. Many of the theological training institutions did not have much missions content. Some did not have any course on missions at all. Pastors being produced by these institutions had little or no understanding of nor interest in missions.

The workshop, therefore, saw an urgent need for our theological schools to include missions as an integral part of their programs. Likewise, there is a need for the missions schools to include theological foundations in their training. With this sort of balanced training and preparation, every theological college graduate will have a "missionary sense and understanding, and every missions-trained graduate will have an adequate theological foundation." In this case, it is hoped that both the missionary and the pastor will make disciples who will be mature, balanced Christians who will make a difference on the African continent and in the world as a whole. One of the many practical outcomes of the workshop was the compendium *Training God's Servants* (1997), jointly edited by my husband Bayo, myself, and Alan Chilver.

Another positive example is the EMC training track's launching of the Council of Missions Training in Africa (COMITA). The EMC has discovered that whereas a good number of schools of missions are emerging, many still need to improve their curriculum, use qualified trainers and teachers, and develop their philosophy of missions training. The result is that people are still being sent out ill equipped. Training issues were further addressed at an all-African consultation that was held in April 1998 in Accra, Ghana. The participants at this consultation agreed that the EMC should set up a body that could help all mission training programs improve in their quality, that could serve as a medium to exchange ideas and faculty, and that could help produce and distribute quality resource materials for missions training. This body, in effect, is serving as a regulatory body for missions training in Africa.

Other advances are seen in the training programs of two denominations. One large denomination in West Africa, the Evangelical Churches of West Africa (ECWA), which was pioneered by the Sudan Interior Mission (SIM), targeted the rural areas through its mission organization called the Evangelical Missionary Society. It began to train vernacular evangelists and preachers in its Bible Training Schools (BTSs), with the sole aim of reach-

ing the local villages. The same thing has been going on in the Africa Inland Church (AIC), which was founded by the Africa Inland Mission (AIM).

Some Selection Procedures

Each training institution has its own selection procedures and criteria. Most require applicants to fill out a series of forms. The Agape School for Training in Discipleship and Missions, for example, requires candidates to fill out forms, obtain references from pastors and sometimes from other respected Christian leaders, write exams, and undergo oral interviews before they are accepted for enrollment for training. Once in the school, the new students are given a full week of intensive orientation to prepare them for the rigors of the training. The orientation allows them to know what to expect and the rationale for each course.

The training is three-pronged: formal, non-formal, and informal. Evaluations based on all three methods of training are given midway and at the end of training by a team of trainers made up of not less than five people. The non-formal and informal training areas carry more weight than the actual academic work, although that too is very important. A great deal of importance is laid on character building. With recommendations from the training center, a formal interview is conducted by the leaders of the mission to determine whether or not a candidate should be accepted into the mission. A missionary is accepted on probation for one year initially and then full time after the period of probation is over, if found suitable.

Family and MK Issues

The typical African culture and religions have little regard for women and children. They are to be seen and not heard. They are usually not reckoned with when important decisions are made. And yet we know that strong nations are made up of strong family units, which include wives, mothers, and children. Healthy family units make healthy churches and healthy nations. A church or a nation that does not care for or have plans for its families, and especially for its children, is doomed to have problems of divorce, delinquency, crime, and other undesirable things to grapple with. The same will be true of any mission agency involved in sending out missionaries, if it does not take much thought for the family.

As inroads are being made in the areas of selection and training, so also is the African mission agency slowly advancing in the area of the family. One especially important issue is the needs of children and the effect that these needs have on the mission as a whole. Some mission organizations in Africa consider only the man or the husband as the bona fide missionary, and they post him to the field without any consideration for his wife and children. Experience has shown that either the wife or the children can destabilize work on the field, unless the needs of the entire family are met.

A prime example of the care a missionary family needs is the kind of care Messiah College is giving. My husband Bayo and I were both missionaries before our three children were born. We had our first two children in a little village where we were serving. Vehicles could only go in there once a week—on market days only. There was no kindergarten except a low standard public school some miles away, too far for a child to walk. And Bayo and I had no means of transportation. The only option left was for me to teach our children basic reading and writing skills at home (there wasn't any home school program in Nigeria then). This difficult experience led us to start a boarding secondary school for MKs a few years ago called Messiah College. It is our attempt to meet some of the teeming needs of MKs in Africa, starting with Nigeria. We of course were not the only missionary and ministry family facing the predicament of lack of provision for our children's education!

Provision for widows is another issue. "This church does not know how to ap-

preciate people. It does not value its staff. I left for training, and no one remembered that I had served here for so many years. It is not that I expect much, but just that they could have at least showed that I came out from among them and that they care. Now the church is doing the same with my friend who needs help with her children." These words were spoken to me by Danuba, a quiet, soft-spoken, and unassuming brother who had just enrolled for missions training. He had been serving with one of the leading Evangelical churches in Nigeria in the area of education and had been nursing a vision of serving in cross-cultural church planting work. He subsequently resigned his job and enrolled for missions training, although with little support from his church.

I wondered why he was telling me these things. He had just introduced me to his friend, a widow, who wanted two of her children to attend our MK school, Messiah College. Apparently Danuba had tried to help enroll this lady's children in Messiah College the previous year, but for lack of sufficient funds they could not be enrolled. Danuba decided to help her again with the process and to enable her to talk with us in Messiah College.

The woman was despairing because of her inability to give quality education to her fatherless kids. "And their father died while in active service with the church," she said. She despaired also because the church had not come to her aid with the welfare of the children. And yet she herself is still on staff at the church, serving under this same organization in which her husband served and died. She and her children survive on a meager salary from the church (which is far from being enough), supplemented by proceeds from the sales of buns and donuts that she makes herself, which her children sell on the streets.

While her son Dubai, 11 years old, was being interviewed for placement in Messiah College, he was asked if he would prefer to attend a public school near home so he could be with his mother. His answer was, "I will spend most of my time hawking donuts, and I don't enjoy doing that." He said he misses his father more when he has to hawk in order to earn money for the family.

Separation Issues

Ryang is a little 12-year-old girl who came to Messiah College in the year 2000. When she was asked about her parents during the interview preceding her admission, she began to sob. She continued crying for quite a while, so pathetically that the panel was helpless and simply allowed her to weep. Even when she later regained composure, she still would not talk about her family.

Messiah College then decided to make contact with the mission agency with which her parents serve, and we made a startling discovery. We found that Ryang does not get to see her parents often because they serve in a distant mission field. The last time she saw her family was when she was eight. Messiah College may not be able to solve this problem; nevertheless, we began to work at it. We said we were going to offer Ryang admission only on the condition that at least one of her parents comes with her on reporting day. This was an attempt to ensure some kind of security for Ryang, at least emotionally. She would at least see one parent, and she would be assured that her family knows exactly where on earth she is.

Another case is that of Tope, who is 17 now and is graduating from Messiah College this year, 2001. When his father brought him to Messiah College in 1995, he was only 11. And for the next three years that followed, he never set eyes on his family. He was constantly lonely, withdrawn, and quiet. He would not play like other youngsters in the school. When the time was drawing near for his class to write the Junior Secondary Certificate Exams, we felt we had to do something quickly so as not to jeopardize Tope's academic performance in the external exams. We had noticed that whenever he was withdrawn, he was weeping. We later learned

that he was crying because he assumed that his parents and family must all be dead! If not, he could not understand why he hadn't seen them. He concluded everyone was hiding the facts from him and not telling him the truth. To deal with this situation, the school decided to facilitate the process of getting Tope to visit his family during one of the Christmas holidays before the external exams his class was about to write.

As I have spoken with missionary parents and leaders about separation issues, I have been surprised and sometimes shocked by some of the things I have heard. For example, many denominational church-based missionaries get posted for missions not necessarily based on call or convictions. They are usually trained in vernacular schools as pastors, then become missionaries, and then are posted to remote, usually government-forsaken villages with no basic amenities for survival. Some pastors manage to lobby for better and favorable postings by playing and dancing along to the tune and dictates of their leaders. Those who do not satisfy their leaders risk getting sent to difficult areas without consideration of their families' needs, such as schooling for the children, health matters, etc. These missionaries end up sending their children to live with relatives or friends who agree to help keep them while they attend school.

While I was working on this chapter, a missionary from one of the leading agencies came to my office to talk about his children and the possibility of enrolling his son in Messiah College. Talking with him, I found out that while he was serving in a church planting situation, his children's education needs were not well met. This understandably bothered him and his wife a great deal. His solution was to find a way to be re-posted to a more favorable location, with access to good schools. Somehow he managed to get elected (done by ballot) as a coordinator of several fields. This position required him to relocate to a city from which he could coordinate the work of the mission. It was from this "favorable" location he heard of Messiah College and came to see me. More often than not, many people get "favorably posted" by lobbying!

Some Issues for Missionary Wives

Very few mission agencies prepare and make use of the wives of the men who have been accepted and sent out as missionaries. It is only the men that are recognized as genuine missionaries. If the wife cannot accompany her husband, then the family is forced to separate. The wife remains in a nearby town or city with the children, so she can keep her job and so the children can go to school. In addition, the majority of the wives of missionaries are unschooled. While their husbands were being trained, they were usually tending the children and caring for their husbands.

Thankfully, there are some changes happening. The trend now among agencies is to try to train the illiterate wives. Many of them are taught how to be better wives and mothers, better home keepers, and better supporters of their missionary husbands. Some training institutions have added evangelism and other relevant courses to the training program for pastor/missionary wives.

Agape Missions and Calvary Ministries, for example, will not allow a married man or woman to enroll in the training program apart from the spouse. The two must both have a call, must both go through training, and must both be sent out as missionaries in their own right, though as a couple. Agape Missions has developed a curriculum for basic training of missions candidates who have no educational background. This includes a literacy program, from which the wives of missionary candidates have benefited a great deal. These women have been graduated and sent out with their husbands as full partners in ministry.

The new sending agencies are generally not prepared for unexpected and un-

timely deaths of serving missionaries. There are cases of missionary families (as in the case described above) where the husband/father and breadwinner has died, and the wife/mother and children are left alone and forgotten. Because no plan had been made for such an unforeseen time as this, sending groups do not seem to know what to do or how to handle the family in their grief and need. Many missionary widows and their children get forgotten. Of necessity, they pull out of the mission and the missions community in order to survive. Very few remain to continue with the ministry following their husband's death.

A successful mission director in Cameroon was sharing about the tragic loss of two of his missionaries. One died of a prolonged illness, leaving a wife and two small children. The other was killed in a ghastly motor accident, leaving a wife and seven children. In the first case, the two little ones were taken over by the non-Christian family of the deceased, to be placed among the relatives for care. But the missionary had denounced idols and had in turn been denounced by his family before his untimely death. Knowing this, the director of the mission went to the dead man's village and single-handedly negotiated to retain the children and to secure them for their mother. The wife and children of the missionary who died in the motor accident were all brought to live with the director's family. The mission director is still wrestling with how to help them with their loss and their practical support, as the mission has no policy in place yet to guide in the area of bereavement and care.

MK Education

Along with their children, missionary parents also struggle greatly with separation. Noel, for example, submitted his resignation letter to his mission board over this very issue. Upon receiving the letter, the leadership of the board wisely invited Noel to the mission headquarters for a chat with the director. Noel had been an outstanding and very successful evangelist and church planter who was penetrating the rural areas of an unreached people group and was reaching out to the local people with the Jesus Film. He had won several people into the kingdom of God.

The "thorn in his flesh," though, was the issue of quality education for his children. In the search for good education, he and his wife had distributed the children to the homes of relatives in different towns, some of whom were not Christians. Unfortunately, Noel's wife was not educated, although Noel himself was a graduate of a theological seminary. She might have been of some help to the children's education if she had had some education herself. What kept gnawing at Noel's heart and conscience was the fact that whenever he made his rounds to visit his children, he never liked what he saw of them. They were imbibing habits and traits their parents had never taught them. The second child was beginning to steal, lie, and curse. Such things broke Noel's heart and prompted him straightway to submit his letter of resignation at the mission. He did it with tears in his eyes—not because he no longer had a call to continue in service, but because of his children's needs.

In talking with the mission director, Noel openly shared what he was going through. At this, the director sent Noel with a letter to us at Messiah College. It was that simple trip to Messiah College that sent Noel singing and rejoicing back to the mission field and to his ministry. His children were admitted into Messiah College at a huge discount. The college solicited help from friends and supporters to supplement the children's fees. After all, Noel never really wanted to quit the field. He was doing a fantastic job. But he felt a deep sense of responsibility and an obligation to his own children. The story is not over, though. We at Messiah College must still grapple with the issue of separation and with the fact that the children are not growing up under the

care and Christian influence of their parents.

Another person who comes to mind is Mallam Adamu. This man has a wonderful ministry reaching out to the desert/nomadic people of northern Nigeria, Niger, and Chad. He and his wife are both powerful evangelists who have been able to impact Muslim villages. But the itinerant nature of their ministry can never allow their children to have a stable school life. This is because most of the areas they cover have no schools apart from Koranic ones. Even if suitable schools are available, the parents work in very hostile environments where their lives are not always safe. Adamu's relatives are all Muslims, so he would not want to send any of his children to any of them. He was in a dilemma until he was directed to Messiah College.

One of the most unusual cases is that of Obi and Janet, who are serving in Swaziland. They have three children. The oldest is schooling in Nigeria and speaks English and a Nigerian language (the mother tongue) very well. The second child is schooling in Mozambique, because Obi and Janet served there for a couple of years. The schooling there is all in Portuguese. When the parents moved to Swaziland, they had to leave this child behind with a colleague's family to continue his education. The third child is with them in Swaziland and can speak some English and the Swastika language.

Many African missionaries serving in countries where the *lingua franca* is different from the one spoken in their home countries (and usually where the educational systems are different too) are not able to afford international school fees for their children. The children either attend national schools and then cannot fit in when they go back home, or they are sent away to live with relatives.

The most painful thing here with the family of Obi and Janet is not the separation, but the fact that the three children cannot communicate with one another when they come together! The parents were not willing to talk this issue over with the mission board that sent them out, nor did they want us to talk to their leaders on their behalf. They did not want to be seen to be complaining or gossiping about their leaders. They would rather suffer and endure in silence or figure out their problems on their own. Likewise, many if not most African missionaries prefer to remain silent over their pains and traumas, or else they quietly resign or withdraw from the mission agency without stating what the reason for withdrawal really is.

Another couple, Joe and Pam, were serving in Liberia, when war broke out and they had to escape. On their return to Nigeria, they felt a call to go to Central African Republic (CAR), a French-speaking nation. Now, the question was what to do with the children, who had already started school in Liberia, an English-speaking country. The system of education in CAR is totally different. Their decision to enroll the children in Messiah College and to go to the mission field without them was a hard one. But the hardest part of the separation was the inability of the parents to afford air tickets for the children to be able to spend holidays with their parents in CAR. In trying to work out a solution to this in order to ease the pain of separation, Messiah College approached the leadership of the mission agency, soliciting some assistance for this family to unite at least once a year. But the leaders felt that it was Joe's family affair and that the family ought to be able to work through the problems in a way that would suit them without the "interference" of the mission.

Six years ago, my husband and I met two families in Togo who were doing an excellent job of planting churches. Today, however, they are no longer on the mission field. The first family had a 19-year-old son who had dropped out of school at the age of 16. He had gone through the French system of education until the junior year of secondary level. The parents then felt he needed to continue in an English school, but because they could not afford the fees for an international school,

they sent him to Nigeria. His French schooling background did not allow him to fit into the English system of education in Nigeria. Inevitably, he dropped out and was also jobless. His younger sister had a similar problem and just settled into an early marriage.

The second family, who had been instrumental in the planting of about 50 churches in northern Togo, had an equally heart-rending experience. Knowing that they could not afford international school fees, they decided to keep their children in a city in Nigeria a couple of hours' drive away from the capital city of Togo. They rented an apartment for their children, where the children lived all by themselves—about five of them of primary and secondary school ages. Each parent was paying a bi-monthly visit alternately. Eventually, they understood the dangers and the negative consequences of this arrangement. Their best recourse, regrettably, was to resign their service as church planters and go back home.

I was talking with an adult MK from Chad recently as he reminisced about how he went through school. He shared how he had to ride horseback on a three-day journey from the mission station to the nearest school. Because of the hassle of going to school that way, his younger brothers could not attend school. Instead, they became shepherd boys and are now illiterate adults. Did it have to be that way?

Some mission agencies and a few denominational mission boards are looking into the area of MK education and are offering what they call a "children's education allowance" to missionary families. In some cases, these allowances offset most of the schooling bills of the MKs, depending on their grade levels. But in many cases, the parents have to make up whatever differences there may be. Messiah College, for example, as a service ministry to missionary families, is always giving discounts ranging from 30% to 80%. This is always done in faith, trusting that God will provide the rest.

Another positive development is that three years ago, an Evangelical group (ECWA) opened a children's hostel in West Africa. There are about 75 MKs of different age groups and grade levels presently being accommodated. Most go to nearby schools, including the ECWA staff school, while some go through the pre-school and primary school programs using the Accelerated Christian Education (or the School of Tomorrow) curriculum.

Physical Health

The health of African missionaries has not yet received much attention in many quarters. In general, there is no organized, consistent, ongoing provision for health care. However, in an emergency, "fire brigade" attention will be given to the need. The African continent is largely a rural continent, and basic amenities such as health delivery services are luxuries in many areas. This is especially true in the rural areas where missionaries are mostly found. Most missionaries hardly ever go for routine medical check-ups unless they are ill. Even then, if the problem is something that they can manage on their own with self-medication, they will not hesitate to do so, unless it becomes an emergency.

Malarial fever, typhoid fever, and dysentery are some of the common diseases in Africa with which missionaries have to contend. Malaria is so common that many people just treat themselves with over-the-counter drugs. Regular health check-ups are not common practice by agencies, so in many cases agencies do not have a physician specifically assigned to do such check-ups on missionaries. There may be Christian physicians in private practice who may volunteer their clinics or their time to help missionaries, and they will often offer discounts for consultancy and treatment. Some mission agencies may have particular hospitals, clinics, or mission-owned hospitals where they will refer their missionaries for consultations and treatment, but I am not aware yet of a

hospital or a clinic in Africa set up solely for missionaries and their families.

The most threatening factor to the health of missionaries and their families is stress. This is so because most African missionaries do not take leave or vacations. They work and continue to work until they are no longer able to work. Many African missionaries work under very austere conditions, and often they are stressed by many factors, including long years of work without vacation, lack of adequate provision, family and children's issues, trauma from civil or religious wars, communal clashes, and so on.

The children of a Nigerian missionary family who served in Sierra Leone still become hysterical at the mere mention of the name "Sierra Leone." They went through a number of traumatic experiences during the country's rebel war, before they were rescued and evacuated by the United Nations peacekeeping corps. No one thought of doing any kind of therapy to help these children overcome the trauma that they experienced. The family never went back to Sierra Leone. They are in another country still serving as missionaries, but their children live in constant fear of anything that sounds like gunshots or war.

It is not uncommon to find one missionary doing the jobs of five people. Because of this, missionaries need to go on vacation at regular intervals, in order to maintain their physical, mental, and spiritual health and to avoid burnout. Most do not do this. Some consider themselves too busy to take a vacation or break. The work is too important. And where there are not enough people to cover the work, there is the fear that the work will collapse. Some think it is unspiritual to go on vacation when souls are perishing. It is never surprising to hear a missionary (and even his/her leader) boast of having not gone on any break for the past 10 years of ministry! And yet there are some who would be happy to have a vacation if only they could afford to do so with their families.

Mission leaders who have had cases of burnout in personnel are beginning to think of the general health of the missionary. As a start, some leaders are recalling their missionaries for "refresher" courses. It is hoped that this input/break will help missionaries develop and improve themselves intellectually and spiritually, as well as provide rest by getting them out of their work domain. For example, member groups of the Nigerian Evangelical Mission Association (NEMA) send their missionaries for short courses or conferences organized by the NEMA-owned institute, the Nigerian Evangelical Missionary Institute. These courses run for a couple of weeks or a few months. They are long enough to enable missionaries to learn but short enough to allow them to get back to their base on the mission field without being gone too long from the work.

Spiritual Warfare

Spiritual warfare is commonplace in any typical mission field in Africa. In many cases, the sending agencies or mission boards endeavor to set up consistent and effective prayer support for their missionaries (prayer support is covered more than financial support). Churches along with cell groups of various sizes and age groups have effectively mobilized for the prayer support of missionaries in the major sending countries. Women's prayer groups are in the forefront of this kind of support.

Missionaries from Pentecostal church backgrounds are nowadays being trained to engage in spiritual warfare, praying against the territorial spirits that rule the regions or the tribes in which the missionaries serve. In fact, some schools of missions include spiritual warfare or power encounter as a course in the curriculum. Prayers with long days of dry fasts (i.e., fasting with no eating and no drinking of water or other fluids) are part and parcel of the missionary work in Africa. Missionaries whose church background has not prepared them for power encounter have had to learn the hard way. Some sending

agencies and churches have learned from their casualties as a result of demonic attacks. They had no choice but to believe and to take action in the area of adequate preparation for power encounter and spiritual warfare.

An example of spiritual warfare is a team of five missionaries (a couple and three singles) who were serving in Senegal, when suddenly their health came under severe attack. The team leader developed inexplicable and excruciating pain all over his body. He could neither sit nor lie down. All the doctors he saw could not diagnose anything. His wife had persistent and bitter migraines. One of the men, a very effective cross-cultural missionary, went out of his mind with depression. The only team member still able to function was a young lady, a short-termer. The team leader, sensing the danger they were all in, decided that the surviving missionary, the short-termer, who was also a novice on the field, should be sent with an SOS back to the mission headquarters. She also took along with her the depressed colleague.

The moment she stepped into the headquarters office with her sick colleague, she burst into tears (tears that had been suppressed throughout their journey), and it took her a few moments to be able to explain what was going on in Senegal. A hasty prayer summons was sent to all prayer partners, while the director of the mission along with two others made a quick trip to Senegal to visit the team and pray. Within a week, everyone on the field had recovered with no medical intervention or explanation. But the man who was brought back home could not get back to the field for a long while. In fact, it took over 10 years before he could return to the field, and even then it was not to the same field but to another. And that was after receiving professional counseling for several months. This whole incident involved spiritual warfare—genuine physical and emotional problems, but stemming from the enemy.

The Way Forward

In May 2000, a continental missions conference in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, called "Mission Africa" brought together missions and church leaders from around the continent. During this conference, the Evangelism and Missions Commission (EMC) of the AEA launched the member care track for Africa. The track works to increase awareness about member care needs and resources, especially among mission leaders. A main strategy is to hold member care awareness seminars and consultations in each region of the continent for mission executives and leaders. Initially, communication between members of the track (and in general) posed a huge hindrance to achieving some of the goals. It is still difficult, especially in areas where telephone services are not very efficient and where the postal service is very slow.

In July 2001, the EMC convened a member care consultation in Cameroon for the central African region. It was attended by mission and church leaders, pastors, and some missionaries. It was a very valuable time, and there was a lot of brainstorming on what should be done on the issue of the care of missionaries in Central Africa. We decided to organize a special awareness seminar for 2002, where many more leaders—the decision makers—will be invited to come and hear and also contribute. A regional member care committee has been set up for this region. The members will work together, looking into the needs of the care of the African missionaries in the region. Also in the pipeline for 2002 is member care training for mission executives and/or personnel managers of mission agencies and boards for the West African region.

Travel within the continent is expensive, especially by air—probably more so than anywhere else in the world. So it is a challenge financially to meet together. In addition, the instability of some African countries makes planning and attending member care/missions events difficult. For example, at the time the Cameroon con-

sultation was held, there were no participants from Central African Republic (CAR), because of the uncertainties caused by a rebel war and an attempt to topple the ruling government.

In conclusion, African missions have come a very long way. There is a growing member care awareness, and I believe that some significant changes will soon take place to provide better support for mission personnel. We are praying for more people to become involved in member care and to raise the standard of care. Our mission efforts will thus improve because our staff will be better prepared and cared for as they serve the Lord in missions.

Reflection and Discussion

1. What are some of the main logistical obstacles to developing member care in Africa?

2. What does a typical member care program/approach include for an African sending church/agency? How does it compare with the member care program/approach from your sending group?

3. Review some of the challenges of African missionary wives or missionary children. What could be done to support them further and to help them contribute to missions?

4. List some ways that non-Africans could work with Africans to develop member care within organizations and at the regional level.

5. Recall some of the case examples in this article—positive or negative. Which ones affected you the most and why?

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***Naomi Famonure** is a missionary with Agape Missions and Evangelistic Network (AMEN) with headquarters in Nigeria. She heard the call of God for missions when she was in high school. She has served in various capacities, including running schools of missions and training and conducting a women's ministry. She is currently working with African MKs at Messiah College. Naomi coordinates the member care track of the Evangelism and Missions Commission of the Association of Evangelicals of Africa. She is married to Bayo, and they have three biological children, Sharon Ife, John-Daniel Adua, and James Ayo, along with several others whom they adopted. Email: naomi_messiah@hotmail.com.*

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Editor's note: Just before the book went to press, the boys dormitory at Messiah College was burned down by an antagonistic religious/terrorist group which opposes Christians and Christian schools. This college, like other Christian schools in the country, has received threats to kill students too.

11

Member Care In North Africa: Finding Life in the Desert

ANKE TISSINGH

Timely field visits, healthy teams, proper orientation, and good relationships are like cool water to a thirsty soul. This is especially true for expatriate and national Christians living in spiritually desolate and often isolated regions like North Africa.

If someone asked me what my most favorite sound is, my thoughts would immediately go to something I often hear on my member care travels in North Africa. It is the sound of the wheels on my little suitcase clicking over the tiles at the railway stations. That suitcase would hold a few changes of clothes but mostly mail and "goodies" to be taken to our workers. My member care trips give me tremendous joy as I become part of the lives of those serving in and around the deserts of North Africa. These dear people, like their national brethren, have such wonderful determination and a sacrificial commitment, with hope in their hearts that one day the church in this spiritual desert will again blossom.

Some Background

Although North Africa is certainly not all covered in desert, it is known for the vast Sahara Desert. This desert dominates most of the area and is greater in size than the United States. Within and surrounding the desert are cities, towns, camps, and villages where over 100 million people live. About 98% of the people of North Africa are Muslims who have had little or no witness of the gospel in a way that they can understand. The people in this area are hospitable and often open to talk about spiritual matters. Just as the desert literally flourishes when there is water and when seed is in the ground, so too we believe that North Africa will spiritually flourish in God's timing. God's promise is sure: The desert *will* bloom (Isa. 35:1).

Mission efforts have occurred in this area for 100 years. We stand on the shoulders of those who have given *all* to see North Africa reached. Some of them have never seen any fruit for their efforts. Currently, though, there is an

emerging joy, growth, and maturation in the North African church. In some nations, the church is just beginning to see its own potential and strengths. In other countries, the need for training is receiving much attention, and the North African believers choose the topics and write the curriculum. It is interesting to note that inner healing and right relationships are on that list, as well as understanding the importance of prayer for deliverance. Many have been involved in the occult before embracing Christianity, either through folk Islam or via widely practiced forms of superstition.

My husband Garry and I began taking short-term teams into North Africa in the early 1980s. Our main role was that of facilitation. We began helping others in their vision, setting long-term goals, getting established on the field, and remaining there effectively. This has evolved to include our supportive roles of pastoral care as well. We have often been deeply moved by the gratefulness that is expressed because of a visit from us or from something as seemingly small as a written message of encouragement. The Lord uses such visits and notes as timely reminders that the workers are indeed remembered, both by their colleagues and leaders and especially by their Comforter and Shepherd.

During a recent field visit, I took a 10-hour train ride to the southern part of the country. The next day, I was off on a five-hour bus ride over the mountains to reach a small team of women, all working in health care in the town. I felt so happy to have made it to them and, above all, just to be in their midst! As we shared a lovely meal together, I asked how we could best use our time together—how to make it worthwhile. With that comment, we all looked at each other, and I saw the answer all over their faces. Just the fact that I had come from so far on their behalf was the greatest thing I could have done. My presence was more valuable than any words that I could communicate.

Stressors and Strategies

Our workers encounter a plethora of stressors that affect their physical, spiritual, emotional, and relational health and also the quality of their work. Coping strategies are not always that simple to find.

Physical Health

Remaining healthy in our part of the world may prove to be a real challenge. Workers, like locals, are faced with the lack of fresh fruit and vegetables, the high price of meat, the unreliable provision of clean water or water at all, plus the presence of diseases such as malaria, cholera, typhoid, and meningitis. There is also insufficient or even no medical care in a number of locations where our workers have made their homes.

We try to teach our workers the basics of health care in this environment and creative ways to fix nutritious meals. We encourage them to consult by phone with a qualified nurse located at our home office in a nearby country. Werner's (1992) *Where There Is No Doctor* has been an invaluable tool. We also encourage them to have regular medical check-ups.

Language Stress

Language learning is a major stressor. In North Africa, workers need to learn at least two languages and sometimes three: French, Arabic, and a tribal language. Additional stress occurs when the children (because of their schooling) do not learn the language in which the parents are ministering. For example, the children may go to a French-speaking school, and the parents will lead a home-group with nationals in Arabic.

Work Stress

The fact that one needs to find "a reason for being there"—some acceptable job which would eventually give residency status for the person and his/her family—has proven to be one of the most challenging issues. One of the workers explained: "It's almost like leading a double life. You live

with the "secret" of being there to share the good news. But then there is your public life and your job, which should give you the reason to stay in the country. How do you balance the two with integrity?"

The red tape in dealing with bureaucracy can become very wearisome and overwhelming, particularly if a worker is trying to start a legitimate business. Along with work concerns may come a long season of trying to sort out ministry options. "How can I/we best contribute to the building of the church in North Africa?" can be quite a perplexing question.

Workers often feel pressured to "look legitimate." For example, they may feel compelled to leave the house in the morning and spend a full day at "work," concerned that neighbors are checking up on them. They may spend so much time and energy at work that little time remains for what they really yearn to do—sensitively share their faith, disciple, church plant. There are no set guidelines as to how to work or connect with the culture. Workers need to consult with colleagues with more experience and come to terms with what God tells them to do, even when team members or other colleagues might question their priorities.

Spiritual Health

It is essential for workers to have learned to have a healthy relationship with God, before settling in a harsh, spiritually dry environment. It is axiomatic yet so true: our self-worth and identity need to be deeply rooted in our assurance that God loves us at all times. I have found that those who do have and prioritize their *loving* relationship with their Heavenly Father, which includes a disciplined devotional lifestyle, seem to have the greatest longevity. This is especially true for families that worship and sing together.

Relational Health

Loneliness may affect us all, even in the midst of a good team with healthy relationships. It can occur when our lives are too busy and when we allow our work/ministry to become too demanding. We miss or even avoid the nurture of friends that is so necessary to maintain our emotional balance and sense of well-being. There are cultural expectations and restrictions which can limit one's opportunities for recreation, such as going out for a nice dinner, taking a walk in the park or along the beach, or going to see a movie. Married women with children are the most isolated and most prone to experience loneliness. They come with strong convictions to do ministry, and although they accept their limitations because of children, language, and culture, they want to have deep soul friendships for sharing and intercession. Very few are in a location that allows such friendships to develop.

Although we would so like to see strong, mutually accountable relationships within teams, the reality is that very few examples exist. It can be very hard to share your weaknesses and be vulnerable with your team members when you know that each one of them already has so much to carry. I encourage each individual to have one "accountability relationship," i.e., someone who can ask the hard questions at any time, such as: How is your thought life? Are you relaxing? Are you keeping to your set goals? Are you eating well, sleeping well? How is your social activity? Are you lonely? How is your walk with God? How is your marriage? Some field workers have this type of relationship with me, others share with a close friend locally, and still others share with confidants via email. Email may be the only real option in many cases.

These issues concerning friendships, loneliness, and accountability are not unique to this part of the world. Nor are they unique to missions. I've found, though, that it is a long and sometimes heart-breaking process to build long-lasting friendships that are free from expectations or hurts. Further, in trying to build friendships with North Africans, one often wonders, What do they really want from me? Perhaps vice versa too! Do they like me as a friend, or are they hoping I

will help them procure some form of legal residency in the West, or find them a suitable companion, or even help them financially?

Couples and Children

Since much time needs to be spent on language learning, building relationships with nationals, and building the team, married couples should not forget to keep their relationship as a priority. Communication skills in one's marriage should be learned before couples come into this part of the world. It is essential to have walked through right ways to resolve conflicts. Under stress, we all tend to blame our spouses or our fellow workers. Couples spending time with trusted couples has been a good way to provide mutual support and strengthen marriages.

There is no perfect option for a child's education. Parents must read, talk to other parents, and sometimes consult with education specialists. In general, it is important to communicate to one's children that they are in no way deprived. They may not have all the gadgets or opportunities their friends overseas have, but at the very least, they certainly have a much wider knowledge of the cultures of the world. Parents need to be careful to communicate by their actions that they trust God and that He gives the best, even though it may not be what they choose. Parents can trust Him also to build their children's characters in ways they are not ordinarily able to because of the new and challenging setting.

Singles

Singles on the field have a special place in missions. Single women, for example, usually have more time to build relationships and minister than their married counterparts. Their service as nurses, social workers, and healthcare teachers has sown thousands of seeds of the love of God in people's hearts. One particular challenge for the single ladies is that they have to come to terms with the fact that they can almost never be alone, except in their own little apartment. Creativity is needed for both men and women on how to maintain a healthy social life, pursue hobbies, and nurture strong and lasting friendships, especially with nationals. Singles need to be assertive at times to ask for their particular emotional and spiritual needs to be met. Team leaders or couples are not always aware or in tune with the specific needs of singles and vice versa.

Teams

North Africa attracts pioneers. These are highly motivated people with noble ideas, determined to carry out their vision and calling. By and large, they are wonderfully committed workers who are prepared to pay a high price to remain. Not all of them, though, have great people skills or have taken the time to develop their skills in leadership or to be a good team player.

Much wisdom is needed in helping teams work through areas of conflict. Conflict of some type is endemic on any team. Some strong visionaries, for instance, might be quite unaware of the tensions created by their leadership or interpersonal styles. New workers coming with high expectations of what team life will be like may be in for some real surprises, once they are "stuck" in a small group of co-workers. The bottom line is that relationships with fellow Christians, even those with the same vision and calling, are not necessarily easy.

Conflict in a relationship can persist, even after intervention and counsel. People may just prefer to separate. In a frontier mission setting, we must be realistic and not expect that these draining conflicts take all the energy of the workers. Some can struggle with a heavy sense of guilt or sin in not being able to resolve a breakdown in relationship. All of this, of course, is a very difficult and painful process.

We see an increasing need for teaching leaders and mentoring them while on the field. At times, we might need to ask leaders to take time out to further develop

their leadership style, sharpen their administrative skills, or be in a safe place where they can receive correction, instruction, and healing. There is often a great deal of loyalty among workers towards their superiors, not wanting to say anything negative about their leaders. Team members may take a long time to share about their unmet expectations. New workers do not easily share their concerns which may be seen as criticism.

As caregivers, it is vitally important that we create a safe place where each worker can freely share about personal stresses and concerns. Not all relationships in our teams need to result in deep, intimate friendships. So we also encourage workers to develop meaningful friendships with folk outside their team, work, and agency.

Orientation

Teams and team members need proper pre-field orientation, regardless of their length of service. A good orientation should include a cultural briefing, time to explore one's lifestyle/work expectations, one's previous experiences with language learning and cross-cultural living, and preferences for privacy, hospitality, raising children, etc. Sensitively probing for deeper issues is a must: In what areas could I improve in relating to people? Do I carry bitterness or have unresolved, broken friendships? Have I suffered under abusive leadership? Do I have a good, deep understanding of a God of justice? How do I deal with suffering? How do I handle fear? (Fear is at the foundation of most of society in this part of the world, and Islam operates this way too.) Have I come to terms with fear of loneliness, loss of loved ones, imprisonment possibilities, singleness, etc.? Not all of these issues need to be "resolved" before going to the field, but they need to be considered seriously before committing oneself.

For single women in their first term, careful placement is required with other families or with other women on the team. They should not be placed alone. The same advice holds for single men. We need to help them stay connected to others.

The orientation package should include discussion on how to respond to poverty, such as beggars at your door, and the possibility of your host country suffering drought. Decide in advance as singles and as a family how much you are willing to contribute daily, monthly, and yearly, so that in your own mind you have a sense of peace about contributions and are not influenced so much by guilt.

New workers, therefore, need to look at their own lives, know about the stresses they will face, and understand the possible pitfalls of life in a new society. Along with these things, though, we need to let them know that the North Africans are lovable people, people who can greatly enrich their lives, people who may become their brothers and sisters in the Lord. And we want each of our workers to know that we are right there with them, committed to help carry their burdens.

One "mechanism" that helps us support our field workers is the Member Care Working Group. This is an interagency affiliation of member care colleagues, currently representing eight organizations, which is under the umbrella of the North Africa Partnership. It provides a wonderful platform where we encourage each other, pray, join together in member care efforts, and plan visits/seminars for workers on the field. This group meets about four times a year and has been in existence for eight years.

Moving On and Debriefing

When for whatever reason, folk leave the field, it is so important to plan enough time to talk with them about their experience. I suggest a week of daily one- to two-hour sessions. Some things that could possibly be discussed include the following: What was good/bad about your experience? What successes/failures did you have? What lessons did you learn? What could we as leaders have done differently/better? What good did you leave behind? How have you said your good-byes and to

whom/what? Have you thanked people and they you? Do you sense God's "smile" on your time? How much time do you need to unwind, rest, and recover? What awaits you in your next location or back in your passport country? What thoughts do you have about a new assignment? When closure is brought to field experience, it is much easier to move on, look to the future, and trust God for the next assignment.

This Holy Seed

Life for North African believers, especially young converts, is tough. There is immense pressure from the family not to leave Islam. Much rejection follows when they choose to obey Jesus. Our brothers and sisters very much need our prayers: prayer that they will find the strength to keep standing in their faith; prayer that they will experience deep joy as they persevere; prayer that their example would encourage others to come to faith in Jesus too. Their courage spurs us on. In fact, to see the price they pay—to lose family relationships, to be an outcast in the strongly knit community, to lose their job—is an encouraging challenge for each of us as workers to even stronger commitment to the Lord and His service.

What a privilege we have in sitting together at the Lord's feet with these special expatriate workers and the national brethren. May He use us, each other, and His Word to speak comfort and hope to each of them. May we see in our days the fulfillment of God's promise to pour out His Spirit upon North Africa, so that this holy seed of the church, which has lain dormant for nearly 13 centuries, will once again abundantly sprout and bring forth much fruit.

Case Study: Team Life, Team Strife

Following is a case study of a fictitious team working in North Africa. The issues, though, are common to many teams.

Elizabeth, a career missionary from Germany, joined a team in North Africa about four months ago. Her job had not been defined, and the hot, dusty, uninviting town made it hard for her to find any way to relax—be it going out for coffee, riding a bike, or just taking a walk to enjoy the sunset. Nonetheless, she feels very strongly about her call, and she wants to "make it on the field." She is also well aware that culturally she cannot develop friendships with men. The team is made up of three single women and two American couples and their children.

Tensions with her two flat mates, a young lady from Korea named Hayyong, and Conchi, a highly qualified social worker from Chile, have been there from the beginning. Lately, though, they have become "too much to bear," as Elizabeth wrote in her last accountability email to her home office. Hayyong keeps smiling and trusting the Lord to work things out, in spite of Conchi's frequent negative comments about Hayyong's culture, Elizabeth's being "so different," and the sense that Elizabeth really does not try to understand the Latino mindset. Elizabeth thinks it is much more an issue of personality than of culture, and she is prepared to talk and work through the personality clashes. Conchi has no time for that. With her many social commitments, she can only prioritize going to the team meetings, which mostly involve prayer and discussions about work assignments. Meals were initially agreed to be the time for relationship building, but Hayyong prefers her own cuisine, and Conchi has only twice sat down for a meal with her flat mates.

Elizabeth had wanted to focus on bonding with the culture, along with her team. Her ministry leader, however, felt that she was too vulnerable to be initially placed in a local family. So she would have to find other options to become familiar with the "ways of the land" and to be immersed in the local dialect.

The timing of Elizabeth's placement was not ideal, a fact recognized by the ministry leader. Both families will be leav-

ing in the next few weeks, to be replaced by a family from Argentina and one from Mexico. These families are in language study right now. All team discussions are about the upcoming changes for the team and closure, not about Elizabeth's entry! The team's language is French, since it is the only language they all have in common. It is no one's first language, though.

Elizabeth would like to live with a missionary family from another agency, that has just moved to this town. They have given her a warm invitation to stay with them and to have her own room, and they hope that Elizabeth could help lighten the burden of home schooling their children. The idea of the move has been met with strong negative responses by her team mates. "Such a move would really destroy our testimony here in the neighborhood," Conchi and Hayyong say, "because people would never understand it and would think that we are not getting along well."

Elizabeth wants to stay strong, but she cannot see how she can cope much longer with these pressures, especially with the "underlying criticism" of Conchi. Something has to change!

Reflection and Discussion

1. Based on the case study and the information in the article, what are some of the main stressors for the three single women?

2. What might be some creative ways for these women to "unwind" after a demanding day at work and ministry?

3. How could a field visit from a trusted leader help this team and improve relationships?

4. The author describes several stressors and coping suggestions in the North African context. Which of these are the most relevant for your setting?

5. How do expatriate and national workers differ in the types of challenges that they face?

Suggested Readings

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Anke Tissingh *was born and raised in Holland, where she received training as a nurse. She joined YWAM in 1976 and moved to North Africa in 1983. Together with her husband, Garry, she co-leads the YWAM work in North Africa. Much of her attention is given to the pastoral needs of YWAM teams on the field, as well as providing assistance to other agencies. She currently coordinates the Member Care Working Group for North Africa. Email: 100767.527@compuserve.com.*

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12

Mobile Member Care Team West Africa: Our Journey and Direction

DARLENE JEROME

What does it take to set up member care well in an unstable region? Consultation with colleagues, careful planning, compatible skills, teamwork, an advisory board, clear values and objectives, financial stability, and a commitment to quality and sacrificial service. This crisis response team is exemplary and is paving the way for similar groups in other high-risk areas.

Let me begin with some excerpts from an email that we received a few years ago. It is from a veteran missionary couple who were traumatized on the field.

"Ask me how many times we have thought about you since the armed robbery! We sure wished that you had been in place here in West Africa. We could have been your first candidates. Without being ugly, we have had the worst field member care. We were shocked at the things that were said, not said, done, and not done for us. We aren't bitter about it at all, but it is something that we have a heart for, and it upsets us to think that this could be repeated on someone else. West Africa needs you! We wish that we could see you for a good, quality debriefing. We have been angry with our leadership but also praised God that something is coming together next year. It is such a need. The first thing I would recommend that you do is train the leadership of all these missions in what to say and do when one of their people has a trauma."

What Is the Mobile Member Care Team?

Mobile Member Care Team (MMCT) is a cooperative, inter-mission ministry that provides training, consultation, and direct crisis response for missionaries on the field. It seems that traumatic events such as evacuation, civil war, kidnapping, car jacking, armed robbery, rape, theft, assault, and severe medical illness are increasingly a common experience for missionaries these days. MMCT exists because we believe that member care that is proactive and compassionate can help missionaries remain in effective service, even after going through crises. Our purpose is to strengthen the mission community in West Africa for healthy, loving service in the midst of challenge, change, and crisis.

The first regional MMCT team (MMCT West Africa), launched in May 2000, serves West Africa (14 countries from Senegal to Nigeria) with a central location of Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire. The MMCT staff is a multidisciplinary group of counselors and trainers that responds to crises by providing coaching and consultation for peer responders and mission administrators, debriefings, assessment, and referral. The team provides training in the areas of interpersonal skills and crisis response, with the goal of equipping missionaries to provide the initial response to crisis as volunteer peer responders.

Our ultimate goal is to establish MMCTs in several strategic locations of the world to provide training and crisis response for members of any mission group. We are developing a model in Côte d'Ivoire that might be contextualized in other regions of the world.

"Standing on the shoulders of the giants before us" is very much the case for the Mobile Member Care Team. Blessed by the vision, experience, and wise counsel of several of the founders and developers of member care as a specialty in missions, we find ourselves launched into an exciting venture. We'd like to share a bit of our journey and vision, as well as some specific strategies that we sense the Lord is blessing as we begin this ministry.

Our Journey From Concept to Service

In mid-1997, several leaders in the member care movement gathered as a "think tank" to consider how missions might work together to enhance the delivery of member care services. Primary concerns expressed were lack of accessibility and the increasing need to support missionaries who experience trauma. It seemed that a mobile member care team might be able to address these concerns. Dr. Karen Carr, a clinical psychologist with a specialty in crisis response, who had served as a part-time consultant for several missions, was identified as a potential leader for this kind of team. Later that year, at the Mental Health and Missions Conference in Indiana, USA, the "think tank" brainstormed with a larger group about what this team might look like and the kinds of services and strategies it might develop.

In March 1998, a core group again met and worked towards a vision statement, values, and more specific strategies. This group agreed to form itself into a Global Advisory Board to ensure that this vision would be fulfilled. Karen Carr was asked to give full-time leadership to the mobile member care team concept. Karen then asked me to join her in this leadership role. (I am a member of Wycliffe Bible Translators and served as Personnel Director with the SIL Cameroon group for nine years. I hold a master's degree in intercultural training and management.) In 1999, Marion Dicke became part of the team as well. Marion served with the Christian and Missionary Alliance/Canada in Zaire for over 15 years in midwifery, leadership training, mission administration, and member care. Currently Karen serves as Clinical Director, I am the Personnel and Training Director, and Marion is a Trainer/Debriefer. This combination of key disciplines—mental health, mission administration, and training—is foundational to the MMCT values and strategy.

Based on advice given by SIL leadership in Africa, we decided to focus on one region of the world so as to ensure our ability to respond. If we spread ourselves too thin, we would set up expectations for service that could not be met. It was suggested that we begin in West Africa for several reasons: lack of member care resources in that area, the increasing incidence of violence and crisis in the region, the missions infrastructure already in place that could help launch a new ministry, and the fact that I was already familiar with life in Africa and had natural connections there.

In August 1998, Karen and I traveled to Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, to explore the possibility of basing there. Abidjan offers a well-developed communications system and is a transportation hub for West Africa. Several missions base regional personnel in Abidjan, and the country traditionally has been politically stable. Twenty-four mission leaders from 14 mission organizations gathered one afternoon to discuss this possibility. We had done a needs survey before the meeting that confirmed our impressions: traumatic events were very common, and crisis response services were non-existent.

We were very encouraged when a group of 11 people, representing eight missions, emerged from this meeting as a Liaison Committee. We related and made plans with them over the next 20 months, until we moved to Abidjan in May 2000. This group was the confirmation from the Holy Spirit that we needed. The Liaison Committee group eventually gave birth to a regional Governing Board of nine people from several missions. The Board provides the MMCT West Africa team leadership, advice, accountability, and networking within the mission community.

As the focus has shifted to issues more specific to West Africa, the Global Advisory Board has passed its oversight role on to the local Governing Board. Currently, the Global Advisory Board is considering where the next regional MMCT might be launched. During the 20 months of transition, the Advisory Committee continued to give wise counsel, support, and strategic input as we fine-tuned the MMCT vision statement, spelled out our values, and developed strategy documents.

Vision Statement

We envision communities of missionaries who are able to withstand life's traumas and challenges, supported by a network of peers and administrators able to respond to crises, with a mobile team providing training, mentoring, consultation, on-site crisis response, and referral.

Our Values

- *Servanthood*. We are servants of our Lord, and our lives are devoted to loving others with humility.
- *Partnership*. We serve in partnership with organizational leadership, churches, and member care providers.
- *Integrity*. We are committed to quality, truth, and the fulfillment of promises.
- *Proactive care*. We provide training and care to promote the strength and resilience of communities and to lessen the negative impact of crises.
- *Accessibility*. We are committed to being available to respond to crises or requests for help in a timely manner.
- *Community development*. We are committed to facilitate peer support networks, resource sharing, and local ownership of member care programs.
- *Diversity*. We believe that a multicultural and multidisciplinary team is the best way to meet the needs of the community we serve.
- *Mutual support*. We are committed to maintaining the health and stability of the team by caring for each other in practical ways, so that we can serve with enduring joy.

MMCT Distinctives

The values expressed above naturally yielded some program distinctives that later led to specific strategies. I would like to comment briefly on some of the distinctive aspects of the MMCT approach to member care.

Proximity

We are committed to our services being accessible to the mission community in a defined service area. This means living in the region and being ready to travel as needed.

Focus on crisis

While some of our strategies contribute to other aspects of member care, our primary focus is on crisis care. Although our specialty is narrow, our geographical

service area of the 14 countries of West Africa is large, and travel in this area is challenging. We must stay focused on crisis response, or our resources will be spread too thin. Keeping this focus is difficult, since our team has the only missionary clinical psychologist that we are aware of in the region.

As missions become aware of Karen's presence and ask her to help with their crises, our definition of crisis is being challenged. Having anticipated this, we had developed a grid to assess and prioritize what others might present to us as crisis situations. But even with such a tool, it is very hard to limit our services when our saying "no" necessitates either a return to the home country, having a mental health professional travel to the field at great expense, or no help at all.

This dynamic means that we are ideally placed to collect data and offer some consultation about the need of a counseling or member care center for this region. Several missions are considering this possibility, and we welcome that development.

Multidisciplinary

Foundational to the MMCT concept is a team of mental health professionals, mission administrators, and trainers serving together with mutual respect and appreciation for the others' roles and contributions. We feel very blessed to have a team of three that reflects this combination now, but we are definitely asking the Lord to increase our numbers.

Partnering with mission leadership

Mission administrators ultimately hold much of the responsibility for member care, especially in crisis situations. They make the initial needs assessment, allocate resources, monitor the situation, and make decisions that significantly impact the effects of traumas. Our desire is to help mission leaders be more successful by intentionally building supportive relationships with them, equipping them, and being available for consultation.

The political unrest in Côte d'Ivoire during the year 2000 gave us numerous opportunities to come alongside mission leaders and consult concerning what member care concerns needed to be addressed before, during, and after episodes of political unrest, violence in the streets, and the ongoing stress of uncertainty. We convened an Inter-Mission Forum on Contingency Planning and Crisis Management at a very strategic point in the period of unrest, that brought together 31 leaders from 19 different organizations. We shared concerns, resources, and strategies, and we strengthened the inter-mission network of support. It was thrilling to facilitate such a gathering and to pass on to them some fundamentals of member care in crisis situations.

Facilitation role

Rather than developing a separate ministry that offers a specialized service parallel to the mission community, we desire to strengthen and equip mission communities to fulfill their mutual care responsibilities as the body of Christ, cutting across organizational boundaries. Larger missions may have personnel available to respond to crises, but many smaller missions do not. Surely the Lord intends for us to serve one another on the frontlines. MMCT is committed to help facilitate inter-mission cooperation toward that end. Seeing these relationships start and grow in the context of inter-mission forums and workshops is very satisfying.

Training emphasis

One-on-one crisis response service by professionals is a luxury in this setting. Our research tells us that there are 5,000 missionaries (and their children) in this region from missions based in North American alone. We know there are many more missionaries from organizations based in other parts of the world: Europe, Asia, Latin America, and other African

countries as well. Considering these numbers and the increasingly unstable and violent environment here, it is essential that we train administrators and peers to respond to crisis situations and that we make a commitment to mentor and coach them in the future.

Proactive care

Traumatic events require immediate and appropriate loving care from the surrounding mission community. We are finding, however, that there is some resistance to seeking or accepting help before someone is visibly struggling, which is not always the case immediately following a trauma. We expect it will take some time and increased awareness through education before proactive care is considered to be normal protocol by leaders and the mission community at large.

MMCT Strategies

Our vision statement, values, and distinctives have contributed to the development of several strategy statements. These include personnel, crisis response, training, partnership, and financial strategies.

Personnel Strategy

So as to meet our personnel needs adequately, we have developed several ways to serve as staff of the Mobile Member Care Team.

Resident personnel

A multidisciplinary staff resides in Abidjan. Their function is to provide administrative leadership to MMCT, training and consultation for mission administrators and peer responders, debriefing, psychological assessments, and brief therapy after crisis events.

Associate personnel

Part-time associate staff may reside in the region or elsewhere in the world (currently, we have a group of about 20, primarily in North America and Europe). Available for short periods of service, from two weeks to a couple months, these individuals serve as workshop staff, give direct post-trauma care, assist with research, serve as consultants, or offer a technical service. We especially appreciate these folks because of what they bring to fill in the staff picture: professional expertise in areas such as with children or in psychiatry, access to research, language abilities in French, German, and Dutch, as well as a variety of cultural backgrounds. In addition, since the resident staff members are presently all single females, it is good to have several men and married couples in the larger staff group.

Peer responders

Because of the sheer size of the task (geographically as well as numbers of mission personnel), trained peer responders are essential to meet the need. Often individuals in formal or informal member care roles already serve as peer debriefers in crisis situations. Our strategy is to train missionaries identified as peer responders within their own missions so that they can better handle the "ordinary" crisis events.

Inter-mission peer responders

From the peer responder group, we select and further train some who are made available by their organization to the wider mission community. Their training further prepares and qualifies them to respond to more difficult crisis situations and to serve other missions at the request of MMCT staff. These teams have an ongoing mentoring, coaching, and training relationship with MMCT staff.

Consultants

Professional consultant input, especially from psychiatrists, is a necessary part of our personnel strategy. Even when performed from a distance via phone or email, this support enhances our effectiveness.

Crisis Response Strategy

According to each situation, MMCT offers several levels of response as described below.

Training

The first response is to prepare mission leaders and peer responders before crises happen, so as to enable their good response when needed. Recognizing that for many years mission leaders and colleagues have responded to members' needs in crisis situations, we desire to enhance the quality of response and care that is already in place.

Indirect response

When a crisis occurs, but its effects are not severe enough that MMCT staff are needed to respond directly, a predetermined indirect response plan is implemented. This includes long-distance consultation with the mission leadership and local peer responders in their specified roles via email or phone. Peer responders are responsible to assess those affected by the trauma, defuse (meet briefly to support) the victims, debrief the group involved, and report back to the mission leadership and the MMCT staff. Protocols are in place for these procedures, and the MMCT staff supervise and mentor the peer responders from a distance via email and phone.

Direct response

When a crisis and its effects are severe enough that mission leaders along with the peer responders do not have the resources to provide the care needed, MMCT staff do their best to respond directly. Circumstances may prevent arrival until several days later, but all efforts are made to expedite the response. In the meantime, local peer responders are responsible for emotional first aid care. Upon arrival of MMCT staff, an assessment of the victims and the affected community is made, direct care is given to those affected, consultation and mentoring are given to mission leadership and the peer responders, and a long-term care plan is determined.

Referral

At times, the best response is a referral to outside services. This could be for various reasons, such as anticipation that long-term care will be required, psychological needs of a specialized nature for which the MMCT has no adequate expertise or resources, and inadequate MMCT staffing or staff already responding to another crisis situation. Although we hope that we can be of help in most situations, there are some for which referral is the best and most responsible contribution we can make.

Rather than rely entirely on a list of member care organizations or individual providers, which may become outdated, we also rely on the referral services of regionally based Christian organizations and individuals familiar with the needs of missionaries.

Training Strategy

MMCT/WA desires to strengthen the mission community and train and equip peer responders and mission leaders to care well for members in crisis. To meet this goal, we offer five workshops, as outlined below, with possibilities for a sixth and seventh as well. Our workshop designs are based on adult learning principles and seek to build on the knowledge, skills, and attitudes each participant brings to the training context.

Sharpening Your Interpersonal Skills (SYIS)

Developed by Dr. Ken Williams of Wycliffe Bible Translators/SIL, this workshop is used worldwide by missions that desire to equip and encourage their members in biblical relational skills such as listening, managing conflicts, and living in community. In a supportive training environment, with an emphasis on Scripture and prayer throughout, participants are guided through four and a half days of skills-building practice in a group of up

to 28 missionaries from several different agencies. We offer this workshop as a means of strengthening the mission community life, believing that this will result in better mutual member care throughout the community.

Understanding Crisis (UC)

This one-day workshop introduces missionaries to the basics of crisis care, so that they can be better friends and colleagues when crises happen. Participants learn what is a normal response to a crisis and how to help someone through the necessary stages of grief after loss or trauma.

Member Care While Managing Crises (MC/MC)

This two-day workshop, following the UC, gathers interested leaders of missions in a particular region to share and learn about the strategic role they play in member care while managing crisis situations. Building on the UC material, topics include the impact of crisis on groups; helpful policies, procedures, and protocols; confidentiality and communication; assessment of vulnerable members; leadership style in crisis; the when, why, and how of debriefings; crisis committees; and how MMCT and local Peer Response Teams can be of service to missions in West Africa. We also offer parts of the MC/MC when we convene a half-day or one-day "Inter-Mission Forum on Contingency Preparation and Crisis Response."

Peer Response Training (PRT) Level 1

This is a six-day workshop that prepares missionaries to serve as peer responders within their own organizations. Participants review and go into more depth with the UC material. In addition, they learn how to debrief someone in crisis one-on-one and how to assess the impact of a traumatic event. The workshop includes opportunities to practice these skills in a supportive context with personal coaching. Participants are also encouraged to further develop their own theology of suffering through Bible studies and times of reflection. People are invited to this workshop based on an application, completion of the SYIS, evaluations by SYIS facilitators, and referrals from mission leadership and peers.

Peer Response Training (PRT) Level 2

This five-day workshop further prepares peer responders and qualifies them to respond to situations for other missions at the request of MMCT staff. Participants have an ongoing mentoring, coaching, and training relationship with MMCT staff. Emphasis in the workshop is placed on further developing screening and assessment skills, skills in working with children, advanced one-on-one debriefing skills, and group debriefings. Prerequisites for PRT Level 2 include successful completion of PRT Level 1, demonstration of competence with the PRT Level 1 skills on the field, an invitation from the MMCT staff for advanced training, and agreement from their mission administration regarding suitability and availability to serve other missions.

MKs and Crisis

This topic is currently being discussed by MMCT and other interested parties. There is potential for two workshops: one for MKs themselves and the other for parents and MK school staff.

Partnership Strategy

A primary value of MMCT/WA is our desire to facilitate and work in partnerships. We are in several strategic partnerships, both formal and informal, with other organizations involved in member care. Some of our partners include Mercy Ministries International and Le Rucher near Geneva in France; Missionary Health Institute in Toronto, Canada; and Headington Research Center of Fuller Seminary and Narramore Christian Foundation, both in California, USA.

We are talking with some Christian educational institutions that have graduate programs in clinical psychology regarding the possibility of MMCT becoming an internship site for graduate students seeking to develop skills of crisis response for the mission community. We also anticipate providing data for students and others conducting research in trauma and missions.

Team members can be loaned to MMCT from another sponsoring organization, whether it be an established mission or a sending home church. We receive these personnel based on a memorandum of understanding drawn up between the sponsoring agency and the MMCT Governing Board.

Financial Strategy

Besides our commitments to the principles of accountability, integrity, and internal responsibility, we have certain financial strategies to facilitate our ministry and make our services accessible to those who need them.

Strategies related to staff finances

- MMCT staff members come with their own personal support needs fully covered (living expenses, furlough travel, professional training, personal and professional insurance, retirement savings, etc.).
- Each staff member contributes a monthly "administrative contribution" to support the MMCT office as it facilitates each one's personal ministry.
- Associate staff are encouraged to raise funds to cover the cost of their short-term service (in particular, air fares).
- Honorariums received by staff while representing MMCT are allocated to the group account.

Strategies related to services

- Participant fees cover workshop costs.
- The missions being served cover crisis response costs, including a suggested per diem honorarium, as they are able.
- MMCT counsels mission leadership to budget for crisis response.
- There is a subsidy fund for crisis response. Those unable to reimburse full costs may apply to this fund, and financial help is provided as available.
- There is a subsidy fund for workshop scholarships. Those unable to pay full workshop registration fees may apply to this fund, and financial help is provided as available.

Strategy for capital purchases

Large capital purchase needs are presented to the regional and home country MMCT/WA constituencies by the staff, regional Governing Board, and Global Advisory Board. The Lord has blessed us with several grants and large donations towards capital purchases.

Blessing others

The first tenth of MMCT/WA non-designated income is given to other ministries with whom MMCT shares common vision, with special consideration to member care development for national missions.

Thanks Be to God

I would like to share a story with you that illustrates some of the key values, distinctives, and strategies that I have presented. While Karen and I were still in French study in early 2000, we received news of a car hijacking involving a young family in their first term of service in West Africa. We were unavailable for direct response at that time, but the Lord had already provided a way for this family to receive care quickly and without having to return to their home country.

Their field leader and his wife quickly drove to where they had been stranded and supported them in practical ways. They also ministered to them using mem-

ber care skills they had recently enhanced through a Sharpening Your Interpersonal Skills workshop that we had led a few months before on a visit to Côte d'Ivoire. In addition, one of our Associate Staff, who is a mental health professional and works in another West African country as a school counselor, was able to go to them and spent five days debriefing the car hijacking, as well as working through some other traumatic events and issues that had developed during their first term. It was very clear that this sort of intervention made the difference in how this family was able to process this crisis. Rather than having a devastating impact on this family, the crisis actually created the opportunity for them to move forward with more insight and resilience than they had going into it. What was meant for evil turned out for good.

As we look back over the past three years at how the Lord has led, nurtured, and provided for the development of the Mobile Member Care Team, we are very thankful. He has blessed us beyond what we could have imagined or dreamed. The Global Advisory Board and local Governing Board are two very tangible examples of His abundant provision for us. In His sovereignty, He has led us, in consultation with our advisors, to make decisions based on what we understood at the time, only to find out later that He had other reasons in mind.

A good example of this is our choosing to base the MMCT in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, because of the city's reputation for being economically healthy and politically stable, which would mean less stress for us as a team in our living situation. While that was true when we visited here in August 1998, over the next two years things quickly deteriorated with a successful coup, other attempted coups, a very rocky election process, inter-ethnic conflicts surfacing into violence in the streets, and a general atmosphere of uncertainty. That is our current situation at the time of this writing, and we are finding it stressful. But the Lord is bringing good out of all this, as we have been able to minister to our immediate community, as well as grow in our personal understanding of what it means to go through these crises and live with these stresses. We are finding Him trustworthy and a very present comfort in the midst of it all.

Future Directions for MMCT

As we develop MMCT in one region of the world, we wonder how the Lord is going to move next. What region of the world is on His heart for the next Mobile Member Care Team? What might that team look like? Who will be on it? What needs to happen to get it going?

At the same time, we can see the need for MMCT here in West Africa to expand to include national church leaders. Our current vision includes national African missionaries from and in this region, but the church leadership is also in need of this kind of care. Might we be able to encourage the development of a ministry with their needs in focus?

The need for a more comprehensive member care center for this region also comes up frequently. Our research tells us that there are 5,000 missionaries (and their children) in this region from missions based in North America alone. We know there are many more from missions based in other parts of the world. Could we help facilitate the development of a multi-service center that supports missions in their efforts to develop member care services for this large group of God's servants? With an emphasis on training, especially of mission leaders and member caregivers, a member care center would be able to make a significant impact in this region, helping God's servants to stay spiritually strong and continue in His service with joy.

Please pray with us as we seek the Lord and join Him in what He is doing here in West Africa in member care, as well as in crisis response across the world of missions.

Reflection and Discussion

1. What regions of the world are most in need of a Mobile Member Care Team?
2. How would the MMCT concept need to be adapted for a particular region?
3. What would it take to get an MMCT started in your region?
4. How could you/your organization contribute to the development of an MMCT?
5. How could the needs of non-expatriate Christian workers be met through an MMCT?

Darlene Jerome *resides in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, and is the Director of Personnel and Training of MMCT/WA, which is her current SIL assignment. She served for nine years as the Personnel Director of the SIL (Wycliffe) Cameroon Branch and brings experience in training, member care, administration, and team building. Darlene worked for two years in primary health care/community development in Liberia as part of her master's degree in intercultural management and training prior to service with SIL. Email: darlene_jerome@sil.org.*

Thanks to my MMCT/WA teammates, Marion Dicke and Karen Carr, for their contributions to this article. Thanks also to my mother, Catherine Jerome, for her editorial input.

13

Member Care Development In South Africa

MARINA PRINS
BRAAM WILLEMSE

The past few years in South Africa have been characterized by major shifts within the government, society, the church, and missions. Many more local churches have started to send out missionaries, either on their own or in partnership with mission agencies. Sending groups in South Africa need to be further equipped as they prepare and support their mission personnel. This chapter looks at strategies for the pre-field, on-field, and reentry stages of mission life. It also describes the recent formation of an inter-agency affiliation and a network of colleagues.

According to the 1996 Census Report, South Africa has a population of just over 40 million people, consisting of Africans (76.7%), Whites (10.9%), Coloureds (8.9%), Indians (2.6%), and Others (0.9%). Over 16 million (40.1%) are reported to be church members, with the Afrikaans Reformed churches being the largest Protestant group, followed by the Pentecostal, Anglican, Methodist, Lutheran, Charismatic, and Presbyterian churches. However, nearly three-quarters of the total population associate themselves with a specific Christian denomination (Froise & Hendriks, 1999, pp. 1, 35, 48).

Our ethnic diversity poses new challenges to the whole society, including the church. To a large degree, South Africa is two worlds in one. On the one hand, we are a developing world, with the poverty and social problems normally associated with this. On the other hand, we are a more developed world. The church has a major role to play in a society where 61% of the population is living in poverty and where it is expected that in two years' time, 250,000 people will be dying of AIDS each year (Froise & Hendriks, 1999, pp. 19, 22).

Over the past decade, the number of missionaries sent out from South Africa has increased six-fold, from 309 in 1990 to 1,870 in 1999 (Froise & Hendriks, 1999, p. 39). The majority of these missionaries come from churches that are attended by those of European descent. These churches have undergone a remarkable growth in missions awareness over the past few years, particularly among Afrikaans-speaking churches. At the same time, there is a significant awakening to missions among churches from disadvantaged communities. According to Froise and Hendriks (1999, p. 41), 41% of South African missionaries are working in

Africa, 25% in Western countries, 19.5% in countries in the 10/40 Window, and the rest in various locations all over the world.

Another interesting phenomenon on the South African missionary landscape is the shift in the type of missionary agencies that are active. Agencies that fit the "traditional model" can still be found, but a new generation of missions agencies is now flourishing as well, including Operation Mobilization (OM), Youth With A Mission (YWAM), South African Action for World Evangelization (SAAWE), Member Care Southern Africa, and others.

In the traditional model, the control of what is happening on the field is strongly in the hands of the agency. These agencies also tend to put less emphasis on the role of the local sending church. In South Africa, it appears that many of these agencies struggle to recruit new missionaries, and some have amalgamated with other traditional agencies.

The sending church has historically had a rather narrow, though vital role: financial and prayer support, occasional contact via letters, field visits, support during furlough, and some supply of clothing and other material needs. "Over the years, we have witnessed the missions enterprise becoming increasingly sophisticated and relatively autonomous from the local church.... Much of the responsibility for the preparation and the spiritual and emotional support of missionaries has been assumed to be the domain of the mission organization" (Strauss & Narramore, 1992, p. 299).

In the past, we have experienced the same trend in South Africa. Most missionaries were sent out by organizations or denominational mission boards with little or no involvement by or responsibility given to the local church. One of the major shifts worldwide—and one that has also taken place within the church in South Africa over the last few years—is that local churches have started to take to heart the task of sending out their own missionaries. Today an increasing number of local churches are sending out missionaries, either on their own or in partnership with organizations.

Member Care Within the South African Church

The term "member care" is relatively new in the South African context, but if we look at the core meaning, the concept is nothing new. Member care simply means caring for the members of the body of Christ. This includes members sent out by the church to reach the unreached. According to O'Donnell (1997, p. 144), member care in this sense is not new. It is a New Testament practice. What is new is the more organized attempt to develop comprehensive, sustainable member care approaches to support cross-cultural Christian workers.

The growing involvement in missions has confronted the church with unique challenges. Because so many of the local churches in South Africa are sending out their own missionaries and are taking full responsibility for them, member care in a South African context not only focuses on the care of the missionary as a total human being, but also has a strong emphasis on *equipping local churches* to be effective in member care. To a large degree, member care is like the dog that chased the car—and caught it—and now it does not know what to do with it. The churches have taken responsibility for their missionaries, but they are not always certain what that responsibility entails.

This leaves us with the challenging task of equipping local churches to send and care for their missionaries effectively. The aim is twofold: firstly, to ensure effective care for the missionary and, secondly, to find ways in which a larger proportion of church members can be involved in the Great Commission. Often it is only a small number of people within a church who are involved or have any interest in missions. At the core of this is the problem that so many church members do not know what their spiritual gifts are, or they are not given the opportunity to minister

in the church according to their gifts and ministries. This is often due to the "clergy-laity apartheid" that still prevails in the church, where the priesthood of all believers is not recognized practically. Often church members who are very competent, well-trained people in civilian life act like zombies the moment they participate in church life, because of the prevalent notion that only those who are ordained have any real say in the church.

In member care in South Africa, a lot of emphasis is therefore put on establishing and training "support teams" (described later) for every missionary sent out by the local church. This should be done not only for missionaries who work outside the borders of South Africa, but also for those who work within South Africa among poor and disadvantaged communities and for those who serve on the home office staff of mission organizations. We want church members to see missions as an extension of the ministry of the local church. We want them to understand that by sending out and caring for their missionaries, they themselves are also reaching the unreached to the ends of the earth.

Local churches have a lot to offer in terms of support for their missionaries. This does not mean that the contributions of missions agencies are overlooked or downplayed. Over the years, agencies have gained experience in matters such as liaison with other organizations and with churches both at home and on the field. They are familiar with arrangements for entering the host country and for transferring money to foreign countries, among other things. The role of missions agencies cannot and must not be overlooked, but that does not mean that local churches should not get involved and gain experience in these areas. Rather, missions agencies should be willing to share their expertise with local churches. At the same time, the local churches must be willing to accept their responsibility and be equipped in the process, so that in the end they will all work together to give effective care and support to the missionary on the field. A partnership is needed between the missionary, the local church, and the mission organization, in which both the local church and the organization have a commitment and responsibility towards the missionary on the field.

Although South African local churches are beginning to understand that missionary support involves much more than just "pay and pray," it still happens that missionaries are being sent out without proper backing and care. As Pirolo (1991, p. 15) puts it, "There is a tremendous need for senders. And the need goes beyond the traditional token involvement of showing up for a farewell party or writing out a cheque to missions. A cross-cultural worker needs the support of a team of people while he is preparing to go, while he is on the field, and when he returns home."

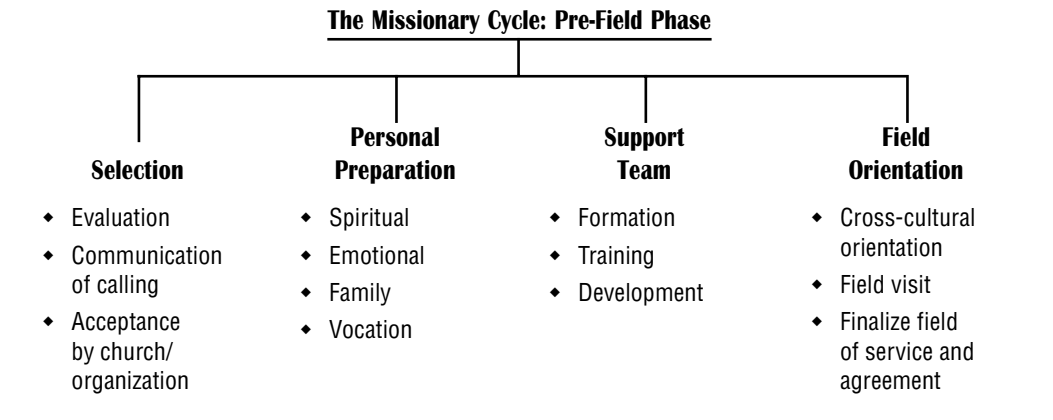
The Missionary Cycle

In order for local churches to develop a proper member care strategy, they need to understand the stages and challenges of missionary life. In our Member Care Southern Africa group, an important part of the teaching that we do covers three main phases in the missionary's cycle: pre-field, on-field, and reentry.

The Pre-Field Phase

The pre-field phase includes four areas: selection, personal preparation, formation of the support team, and field orientation. Simply stated, during the selection process, information about the missionary candidate is gathered by questionnaires, references, and psychometric evaluation. The purpose of this process is to get relevant information and a profile of a candidate's functional skills, personality, and behavioral characteristics. This information can be used to:

- Identify emotional problems and personality disorders.
- Assess areas of strength.



- Identify and address areas of personal development.
- Assist in career planning.
- Determine if a candidate is suitable for a specific environment, culture, or position.

The missionary should be well prepared spiritually, emotionally, and practically. Where needed, additional skills should be acquired. When a family is evaluated, it is essential that the wife and children be included in the evaluation. The missionary candidate and family should then communicate their calling to the leadership of the church and/or the agency (if involved). After prayer and discussion, the candidate and family are accepted by the different parties as their missionaries.

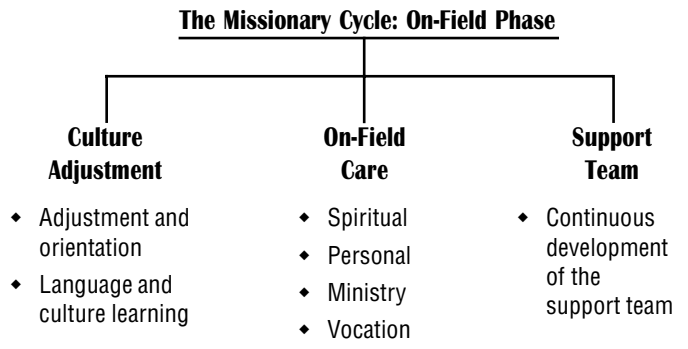
Proper evaluation is one of the most neglected areas before missionaries go to the field. It is only recently that local churches (and the mission community) in South Africa have started to realize the value of psychometric evaluation. But this has created other problems, such as the need for an evaluation battery that is suitable for the South African population, and the need for specialists who are not only qualified to conduct an evaluation but also have experience in cross-cultural missions.

During the pre-field phase, a support team should be formed and equipped and should start to function within the local church. A support team is a group of friends and supporters of a missionary and his family, who work together as a team to ensure that the missionary receives the necessary care. This is done under the leadership of a *support team coordinator* or *advocate*. On the team, there are different areas of responsibility or *portfolios*, which could include the following: morale support, logistical support (including medical care), prayer support, communication support, financial support, occupational support (if the missionary is a tentmaker), and reentry support.

According to Froise and Hendriks (1999, p. 42), "The number of people in [theological] training, both full-time and part-time, has risen appreciably over the past decade." Because many of these theological institutions offer training in missions, this also gives us an indication of trends in missionary training. What is interesting, however, is that the method of training is changing from full-time to part-time. The number of full-time students peaked in 1997, then started to decline. There are probably several reasons for this:

- Financial constraints.
- Lack of accommodation for students' families.
- The time that students have to spend away from their homes/ministry.

Formal institutions are therefore not always a solution for these problems, particularly if the students come from a previously disadvantaged community. Some



churches have introduced theological training as part of their church program in an attempt to address the problem. Unfortunately, few church based Bible schools offer courses in missions. Organizations such as YWAM and OM offer their own training in missions to their recruits.

It is also important that missionaries-in-training should visit their field of service in advance. In this way, they can get first-hand information on conditions on the field, as well as a better idea of their roles.

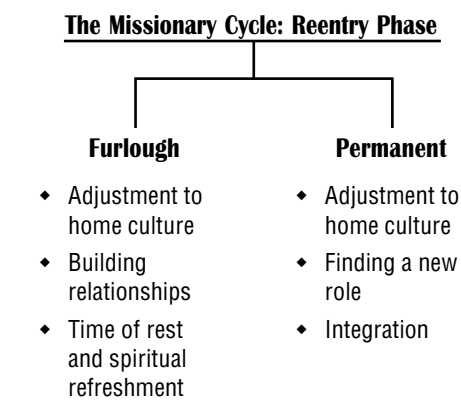
The On-Field Phase

During the on-field phase, the missionary has to adjust to and become part of a new environment and lifestyle. It is important for the support team back home to understand what the missionary is experiencing (e.g., culture stress, language learning), in order to provide the necessary support. One of the best ways to achieve this is through regular visits by members of the support team. If missionaries know that their supporters actually understand the living conditions in which they minister and that they have met some of those with whom they are ministering, it will be much easier for mutual trust to develop. On the other hand, a missionary will feel much less comfortable with supporters who have never visited the field and who do not actually understand the environment. Regular communication via email and phone calls with the missionary is also essential.

During this phase, the support team must continuously develop and expand their member care strategy to meet the needs of the missionary. Where the support team itself cannot give the necessary support, alternatives should be found. For example, if someone from the support team cannot visit the field or does not have the expertise to give the necessary member care support on the field, other organizations that are already operating on the field might be asked to help the missionary on their behalf.

The Reentry Phase

In many cases, the missionary returns to the sending church during reentry. Because reentry is usually a difficult and stressful time for the missionary, it is extremely important that the local church will be able to help in the process. So many times, neither the missionary nor the



sending church is properly prepared for this phase. Often the missionary is not seen as the church's responsibility after the return home, and financial support is cut the moment one arrives back home. In other cases, churches are willing to assist their missionaries, but they simply do not know how to care for them during reentry. In the past, the church assumed that the missions agency sent the missionary out and that the agency should therefore take care of the missionary during reentry (which in many cases did not happen). It is often difficult for a large organization to give the necessary personal attention to each missionary during reentry. In this sense, the local church's structure and functioning make it easier to look after the missionary's specific reentry needs. The missionary can, for example, become part of a cell or care group. The members of these groups can be briefed as to the specific needs of a returning missionary.

Member Care Developments in South Africa

In 1999 and 2000, there were two significant member care developments in South Africa. These were the formation of an interagency affiliation called Member Care Southern Africa and the formation of a network of colleagues called the Member Care Forum.

Member Care Southern Africa

Preparation for the founding of Member Care Southern Africa started in March 1999. Initially, research was done, general member care literature was gathered, and national and international member care networks were contacted. In September 1999, a member care work group was formed, which developed during 2000 into the organization Member Care Southern Africa, of which we (the authors) are a part. We are a missions support organization, involved in the development of member care within and from South Africa. We have five focus areas: evaluation of missionaries, training and equipping of churches, on-field care, reentry care, and research.

Evaluation of missionaries

The aim of the evaluation procedure is to get an overall profile of missionary candidates. Information is gathered about their personality, work style, contribution in a team, and spiritual gifts by means of different measuring instruments. These items, in combination with personal interviews that are focused on spiritual maturity and the person's calling, give a good indication of where and in what position the person can be used optimally by the Lord.

During the past year, a preliminary evaluation battery has been compiled which is suitable for use with the South African population. Evaluation has already been done on a small scale by a psychologist with experience in missions and in psychometric evaluation of missionaries. In the future, Member Care Southern Africa would like to expand this service by providing a service to evaluate missionary candidates in the Western Cape, and by extending this service by identifying suitable psychologists in all the major cities of South Africa.

Training and equipping churches

We have developed material that we present as a workshop for local churches. The following topics are covered in this material:

- Definition, biblical basis, and importance of member care.
- Role of the local church in the preparation and sending of a missionary.
- Phases in the missionary's life.
- Phases in the preparation, sending, and care of the missionary.
- Evaluation of the missionary.
- Support team within the local church.
- Attrition, on-field care, and reentry.

This material is available in the handbooks *Member Care for Missionaries: A Practical Guide for Senders* (Prins & Willemse, 2001a; also in Afrikaans) and *The Support Team* (Prins & Willemse, 2001b; also in Afrikaans). At this stage, the care of missionaries' children is not addressed as a separate section, although it is mentioned where applicable in the other sections. The workshops are also suitable for use at conferences.

On-field care

It is important for missionaries to be backed up and cared for while on the field. This type of care consists of two parts. The first is *day-to-day care*, with the emphasis on practical, spiritual, and emotional needs. Here, Member Care Southern Africa can act as consultants on what is available in terms of courses for spiritual and emotional care, e.g., team building, interpersonal skills, and marriage and family enrichment.

The second type of care involves *crisis management* to help during potentially traumatic experiences—e.g., during wars, armed robbery, or emotional struggles such as serious depression. Again, we can act as consultants on what is available in terms of the availability of specialized crisis care teams.

Reentry care

If reentry is not handled with wisdom and care, the result can be a missionary who is spiritually and emotionally so wounded and disillusioned that it can take years to recover—if ever. Reentry is one of the topics that is addressed in the workshop for local churches. The aim is to help the missionary and the sending church to understand the reentry process and to give guidelines on reentry care. Member Care Southern Africa also presents a short workshop on reentry.

Research

Research is an inseparable part of the development of each of the other four areas. Member Care Southern Africa, therefore, spends a lot of time on networking nationally and internationally with individuals and organizations specializing in member care. We gather, compile, distribute, and let others know about both newer and older member care materials that are available.

Two years ago, when Member Care Southern Africa was started, the term "member care" was hardly known in South Africa. Initially, it was difficult to convince people that member care was an important aspect of missions. Funding in general is difficult in South Africa, because of the pressing national needs, and finding funding for a relatively unknown aspect of missions is even more difficult. However, there were a few individuals and local churches who were very faithful in their support—both morally and financially.

It was Walter Henrichsen who said, "Grow into business; do not go into business." Kelly O'Donnell reminded us, "Function brings people together; fellowship keeps them together." This is exactly what happened with our member care group. We were aware of the hand of the Lord, not pushing or forcing, but constantly urging us on through His love and care for His church, including those on the front line of the battle. Step by step, He opened the doors, gave us the right contacts (nationally and internationally), and at the right time He fanned the flame of interest in what we were doing. Now, after two years, we can look back and see the fruit of our labor—a growing ministry that came about according to His will and at His time. One of the outstanding things was the moral and spiritual support we could give each other as a team. It is not possible to be effectively involved in any care ministry without giving care to each other.

If there is one thing that other existing or aspiring member care groups can learn from us, it is to have patience—even if the first phase takes time. "Do not despise the small beginning, for the eyes of the Lord rejoice to see the work begin" (Zech. 4:10, LB). In God's own timing, He will com-

plete His work. "In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus" (Phil. 1:4-6, NIV).

Member Care Forum

The Member Care Forum was officially formed in June 2000 in Cape Town, in response to the felt need of many to organize a member care network in South Africa. The Forum functions as a partnership with a facilitator, Marina Prins, and different working groups. The participants include members from different organizations and churches, as well as individuals involved in the sending and caring of missionaries. The Forum meets every three to four months. The purpose of the Forum is to enhance the development of member care resources within and from South Africa.

At the formation meeting, participants identified several member care issues which they felt needed attention. At the next meeting, three working groups were formed to address the most important of these issues, as identified by the participants. The three groups are equipping the local church, a database for member care resources, and reentry care. It is hoped that other issues identified at the first meeting will develop into working groups as the Forum develops. These include intercession, evaluation, and MK care.

At this stage, most of the participants are from the Western Cape (in the south, in the vicinity of Cape Town), but a sister member care group has already started to develop in Gauteng province (located in the north around Johannesburg/Pretoria). There are people in other provinces who are also interested in becoming part of this development. In the future, we hope to establish a national member care network within South Africa.

Conclusion

A great deal of member care development still needs to be done in South Africa. However, a start has been made as churches, organizations, and individuals begin to work more intentionally together. The challenge in South Africa today is not just to send out more missionaries. The challenge is also to get local churches and agencies to partner together to ensure that missionaries are effectively cared for, from the pre-field phase right through to reentry.

Reflection and Discussion

1. List some of the challenges that your local church/organization is faced with in terms of the sending and caring of your missionaries. Which are the main ones at this time?

2. List some practical ways in which members of your church can be involved in missionary support. Which specific people could be/are involved in a support team?

3. What resources are available for the care of your missionaries on the field? And for reentry? How can this type of care be improved?

4. What resources could your church/organization offer to enhance member care development within your region/country?

5. How might the experiences/approach of Member Care Southern Africa apply to member care development in your region/country? Could a similar group be started?

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Marina Prins *holds a M.Sc. Agriculture degree from the University of Stellenbosch (South Africa). From 1991 to 1997, she served as a missionary of the Dutch Reformed Church Mission in Malawi. She is currently director of Member Care Southern Africa and is responsible for member care development. This includes writing member care material, presenting workshops, and networking both nationally and internationally. She is also the facilitator of the Member Care Forum. Email: mcsa@xsinet.co.za.*

Braam Willemse *holds an Honours B.A. degree from the University of Stellenbosch (South Africa), as well as a L.Th. from Cape Town Baptist College. He and his wife, Marianne, a medical doctor, were missionaries to the Yao People in Malawi for six years. He was also Director (Church Liaison) with Global Careers and one of the Directors of Member Care Southern Africa. Braam died shortly after this article was written. He will be dearly missed.*

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14

Tumaini Counselling Centre: Ten Years In/From East Africa

ROGER K. BROWN
SHIRLEY M. BROWN

In this chapter, we will look at the operation of a field-based missionary care center, with a specific focus on the Tumaini Centre. We will explore the relevance of field counseling, the types of services that are offered, how the center is managed, future directions, and several other related areas. Five brief case studies conclude the chapter.

Missionaries are normal people who serve in some very challenging situations. They may face political crises, hostilities, or physical assault. The stresses of cross-cultural adjustment can bring out unsettled past issues or raise new concerns. Missionaries can face depression, burnout, anxiety, marital difficulties, or interpersonal struggles. Their children may deal with learning difficulties, bed-wetting, eating disorders, or acting-out. Just like the Christian populations whom they represent in their respective sending countries, missionaries are not exempt from the cares and troubles of this fallen world.

Missionaries from past generations were generally more familiar with hardships and fewer luxuries. Many came from hard-working rural backgrounds and from strong Christian homes. They are sometimes perceived as having exhibited greater stress-hardiness than today's missionaries. Yet some of the stalwart missionaries of earlier generations were not permitted to express their very human hurts and needs within their Christian home cultures. Some families grew in God's grace during hardships, and others suffered deeper hurts and wounds. The emotional and family sacrifices of these servants cannot be fully tallied in this world.

Missionary service has always been challenging. Political instability, crumbling infrastructures, rampant crime, hostile environments, isolation, separation from familiar support systems, financial pressures, and family needs are just some of the common stressors experienced by missionaries. As more honest expressions of hurts and needs are being permitted in the Christian community, church workers and missionaries have ventured forth to share their own struggles. This increasingly candid acknowledgment of the emotional side of life has led to more candidates

with emotional struggles applying to serve as missionaries. These candidates often expect and need more emotional and spiritual support, even on their field of service.

In general, missionaries returning to many Western countries have been able to receive emotional, physical, and spiritual care from specialized missionary providers such as Link Care in the United States, InterHealth in the United Kingdom, and Missionary Health Institute in Canada. Christian mental health professionals with special interest and skills are often available to provide helpful counseling and therapy. Missionaries on the field, however, usually have few options to receive professionally trained Christian counseling or therapy. Basically, the demand for care far exceeds the available care.

Several organizations have placed counselors at missionary boarding schools (Rift Valley Academy, Kijabe, Kenya; Faith Academy, Manila, Philippines). Their function has been primarily to care for the emotional needs of the students of these schools, but many have also been called upon to counsel staff or even other missionaries who have come to see them. Some organizations have had a pastoral counselor travel from mission station to mission station to provide a listening ear, guidance, or intervention. While helpful at times, this technique can be limited in adequately addressing long-term issues or major problems. Other organizations have placed an individual counselor in a field setting on a more permanent basis. For example, SIL began field placement of missionary counselors in 1983. Some of these counselors have faced pressures relating to being overloaded with requests for their services, professional isolation, and being stretched beyond their areas of expertise. They may or may not be available to missionaries outside their own organization.

When missionary crises or concerns arise, mission organizations may spend inordinate amounts of time, energy, and finances to provide support for their missionaries and field administrators. That support may be too little, too late, or off-target. Administrators can feel overwhelmed or perplexed as they work through a crisis. Despite the best efforts by a mission agency, missionaries do not always feel heard and understood. Both the mission and the missionary may express a need for professional expertise to provide support and intervention. All too often, the outcome may not be so positive for the missionary, the mission agency, and the ministry. When the needs for care have been urgent, these missionaries have had to "uproot" themselves from their place of service and home in order to go elsewhere for help.

Mission organizations often send administrators, pastors, or counselors to their fields for crisis intervention. They may speak at field conferences with the option of short-term counseling. More recently, some organizations have begun placing professional counselors in field settings as short- or long-term missionaries. This is true for Older Sending Countries (OSCs) and to a lesser extent for Newer Sending Countries (NSCs).

Tumaini Counselling Centre

In the mid-1980s, missionaries of Africa Inland Mission International (AIM) and Wycliffe Bible Translators/SIL began discussing the possibility of shared office space for their missionary counselors located in East Africa. This cooperation led to the opening of Tumaini Counselling Centre in Nairobi, Kenya in late 1990. Tumaini (pronounced *to my ee' nee*) is a Swahili word for "hope," reflecting the hope for healing and care that is given at the center.

Tumaini Counselling Centre is the only counseling center of its kind on the African continent. Based in a regional hub for missionary activity which includes field mission offices, MK schools, and medical and transportation services, it is dedicated to the care of missionaries and their families. The center is staffed by a multidisci-

plinary team of missionary therapists. These missionary caregivers are well-trained and experienced professionals who are able to integrate their Christian faith with their counseling, consultation, and training. The staff members prioritize their own mission agencies, AIM and SIL. However, they also see missionaries from other mission agencies serving across Africa. Approximately 100 different Protestant mission organizations have made use of Tumaini services.

The primary users of Tumaini are missionaries who work in Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Sudan. However, Tumaini also regularly serves missionaries working in more distant countries throughout East and Central Africa, including Ethiopia, Burundi, Rwanda, Mozambique, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Lesotho, Comoros, Madagascar, and Chad. Additionally, 11 West African countries are covered by administrative consultations. Missionaries from these countries occasionally fly to Nairobi for evaluations, and the therapists at times fly there for teaching or crisis intervention.

Missionaries utilizing the center originate from about 20 sending nations. These have included missionaries coming from North and South America, Western Europe, East Asia, Africa, Australia, and New Zealand. Although most clients are non-Africans, there has been a recent increased contact with this particular underserved missionary community. Most clients are self-referred. Friends or peers are often the source of information about the helpfulness of the counseling ministry. The majority of the users come voluntarily for assistance; only rarely are evaluations required by an individual's organization.

Types of Services

A variety of services are provided within and from Nairobi. The main ones are counseling (individual, group, family, child, and marital); critical incident stress debriefings; consultation with mission administrators and faculty/administration of MK schools; team-building workshops and conflict management; seminars on topics such as marriage enrichment, parenting, stress management, and interpersonal skills; speaking at schools or churches; writing articles; and lending out library books relating to individual, group, couple, or family growth and spiritual life.

Field emergencies may require the counselors to travel internationally. In many cases, the missionaries affected come to Nairobi for evaluation and possible ongoing treatment, since lasting interventions often require more time and resources than the counselor is able to provide in a brief interaction.

Occasionally the missionary counselors are able to respond to international requests for speaking during field conferences or presenting seminars. However, such travels have necessarily been limited due to the time commitment, disruption to the Nairobi-based ministry, and family needs.

Types of Problems

For the most part, the counseling issues seen at Tumaini have been remarkably similar to those experienced in the West. Political instability, spiritual warfare, and cross-cultural transitions can create or amplify problems.

Trauma victims. Individuals who have experienced significant trauma are seen. Violent assaults, car hijackings, accidents, war, and evacuations are significant dynamics for many missionaries.

Boundaries. Because missionaries often have a high work ethic and a great deal of compassion, and because they are surrounded with endless needs, some may struggle with keeping a healthy balance in their own work and personal needs.

Adjustment difficulties. Many missionaries live in harsh conditions, whether in deserts, remote villages, or sprawling cities. Culture shock, homesickness, financial pressures, and prolonged separations from loved ones are a part of most missionaries' lives. Consequently, there are significant stress issues of work and even daily living.

Spiritual issues. Missionaries are not immune from struggling with distorted images of God or themselves. Issues of acceptance, significance, and security inhibit some individuals in their spiritual growth. This can cut short their missionary service if not adequately addressed when the distortion becomes evident.

Interpersonal difficulties. Relationships with team members often involve multiple cultures, different expectations, and interdependent living in close quarters. Personality clashes, difficulties with confrontation and conflict resolution, unspoken expectations, and misunderstanding of cultural cues can complicate interpersonal relationships.

Past issues. Every missionary comes to the mission field influenced by past experiences, whether positive or negative. Even the best screening and orientation cannot guarantee that past personal struggles will not resurface in the intense situations on the mission field. More young missionaries are coming from broken or abusive homes. Many are first-generation believers who are learning to establish Christ-like homes and marriages. The lack of familiar support systems on the field can weaken the buffer which protects individuals during times of difficulty. Stress is then experienced with greater intensity, leading to a possible breakdown in the missionary's stability and functioning.

Substance abuse and addictions. Unlike Western counseling groups, the Tumaini counselors rarely see substance abuse among adults or teens. Workaholism can be an issue for some missionaries. Recent availability of the Internet heightens the risk for pornography for both MKs and missionaries.

Developmental disorders. Attention Deficit Disorder and learning disorders occur in the same frequency as in the West. However, they cannot be adequately recognized, understood, or treated in much of Africa. Professional services provided by or coordinated through Tumaini have proven essential for many missionary families to remain on the field.

Services on the Field or Services Back Home?

In the early stages of Tumaini, several counselors attempted to provide therapy for individuals struggling with sexual abuse, severe early trauma, personality disorders, or severe eating disorders. In the process, the counselors found that inordinate amounts of time were spent helping just a few people in crisis. This did not allow time or energy to assist greater numbers of other missionaries who were struggling with less entrenched problems. It has subsequently been recognized that severe needs cannot be dealt with in depth, even in a specialized field care center such as Tumaini. Counselor involvement with more severe diagnoses is limited to crisis intervention, evaluation, and facilitating transfer to a sending country that can provide services.

These more deeply affected clients can tend to be unstable and require significant amounts of time from the counselors, as well as their administrators and fellow missionaries. This can distract from the ongoing ministries of fellow missionaries and administrators and can even harm missionary reputations. In addition, their healing may necessitate the availability of ancillary support services, hospitals, close friends, or family members near at hand.

Nonetheless, when a family or individual missionary is known to have a problem which will require return to a sending country for assistance, there are recognized benefits to a limited number of sessions with one of the field counselors. This can be an important opportunity to discuss transition, anger, and grief issues that might hinder addressing underlying problems once the person has relocated.

The Tumaini professional staff strongly recommend against mission organizations sending missionaries with known emotional problems to the field, with the assumption that they can utilize Tumaini for

providing ongoing care. Field resources remain limited, and the staff members at the center are committed to careful allocation of their energy and resources. It is imperative that each missionary candidate be fully screened psychologically and physically. Missionaries should not be sent to the field unless they have adequately addressed psychological and medical concerns raised in the selection process. The candidate with unresolved emotional and relational problems is more likely to be successful on the field if he/she has had time in the home country after completing counseling to consolidate the gains made during therapy. Adjustment tasks of being a new missionary can overwhelm or set back previous progress in dealing with deep-seated issues. It should be the mutual goal of the missionary and the sending and receiving unit to facilitate successful transition and ministry.

The premature sending of candidates to the field is not helpful to the missionary family, their supporters, the receiving ministry, nor the overall missionary goal. Field missionaries and churches need new colleagues who are able to join in partnership after appropriate field orientation. They are expected to begin taking on responsibilities, rather than requiring inordinate amounts of emotional support. The national church needs mature believers as role models, not missionaries who might distract with unhealthy coping or relationship patterns.

How Did Tumaini Counselling Centre Develop?

The formation of Tumaini Counselling Centre can only be described as miraculous in God's design and leading. Each of the original counseling staff was called independently to serve in a counselling ministry in East Africa.

In 1983, David Dunkerton, a veteran AIM church planter, returned to Kenya with a counseling degree and took an assignment as professor and chaplain at Daystar University in Nairobi. Missionaries began to come to his office for counseling in increasing numbers as trust was built with missionaries and administration. AIM subsequently adopted Dave's vision for field counseling support and approved a new department named AIM Care.

In 1983, God also called Roger Brown, a medical doctor, to train in general and child and adolescent psychiatry, with the intent to work in a missionary support ministry somewhere in the world. The Browns discussed ministry proposals with several mission agencies, and it became very clear that AIM was ready to move forward with a missionary counseling center that was very much in line with their vision for ministry.

David Dunkerton also developed a relationship with the SIL International Counseling Department as staff members passed through Nairobi. Roger Brown was developing a mutually supportive relationship with the Dallas-based SIL counseling office as he completed his training and prepared to join AIM Care. Thus, both organizations were ripe for greater interaction when God led veteran SIL missionary counselors Harry and Pat Miersma to a new counseling ministry assignment in Nairobi in 1989. Harry (M.A., M.F.C.C.) and Pat (M.N., C.S.) had first seen the need for field missionary counselors while serving as Reformed Church in America (RCA) missionaries in Ethiopia during the Communist revolution (1973–1976). Following graduate work in their respective fields, they joined the counseling staff of Wycliffe Bible Translators in 1980. They served with Wycliffe's sister organization, SIL, as counselors for three years in Papua New Guinea before accepting their current Africa assignment in 1989. As they discussed with Dave Dunkerton the details of a cooperative SIL/AIM ministry, both organizations gave their consent and blessings, and common office space was rented in late 1990. This cooperative location was called Tumaini Counselling Centre.

The Browns arrived in Nairobi in 1991 to join the counseling ministry under AIM.

The Dunkertons later returned to the States at the end of 1992 to assume a pastorate. SIL psychiatrist Dr. Richard Bagge and his family arrived in 1993. Several veteran missionaries with pastoral or other counseling experience also helped at the center on a part-time basis. In 1998, AIM added veteran counselors John (M.A., M.F.F.C.) and Karen (M.A.) Zilen to the team. Nancy Crawford, a clinical psychologist, and Doug Ghrist, psychiatrist, joined the AIM staff in 2001.

A key to the acceptance of a counseling ministry by the missions community was the groundwork laid by Dave Dunkerton. His prior church planting years validated him as a "real missionary" and allowed fellow missionaries to know that he could identify with their experiences. Dave was a respected spiritual leader within the community and a friend to many, so that potential misgivings against counseling were lessened. The counsel he provided was culturally sensitive, wise, and godly. As other Tumaini counselors arrived, Dave perceptively introduced them to the missionary community. Thus he facilitated new counselors' sensitivity to fellow missionaries, as well as the missionaries' acceptance of these counselors.

How Does Tumaini Counselling Centre Function?

Tumaini is not a formal organization per se, but rather a location where missionary counselors work together and provide mutual support, both professional and personal. The staff shares resources such as auxiliary personnel, office equipment, utility and security expenses, a lending library, and a professional library. The key to this cooperation has been a high commitment to staff relationships, as well as viewing respective ministries as ultimately belonging to the Lord and not to an organization. The counselors meet weekly for mutual support and case discussions, as well as daily informal interactions. Tumaini is not a formal entity, but rather a place where each mission headquarters its counseling ministry. This also allows each organization to maintain its distinct character and philosophy and minimizes professional and organizational liability concerns.

The AIM and SIL counseling departments receive ministry direction from their respective administrative boards or councils. The counseling staff also contribute direction and recommendations for ministry emphases. Historically, the requests for services have nearly always exceeded staff capabilities. The counselors have wrestled over the years with ways to provide crisis care, ongoing therapies, and preventative care, yet still protect themselves from being too overwhelmed to be effective. In the recent past, staff members were able to get away for a staff retreat to discuss direction and focus. The time investment was helpful to strategize together on potential interventions and proactive services. It was also an invaluable mutual support.

Africa Inland Mission has historically had a vision to provide services for the broader missions community of like-minded mission agencies in East Africa. The counseling ministry is a good fit for the AIM International Services Department, which also provides bush flights, freight shipping and clearing, a guesthouse, financial services, etc. AIM has also been involved in developing and managing institutions such as Rift Valley Academy and Kijabe Medical Center. Thus, AIM has been designated to help oversee the general office management of the counseling center. The SIL staff members have contributed from the wealth of many years of experience in member care, and they assist in office management responsibilities when coverage is needed. The entire counseling staff and office manager meet regularly to discuss policies and direction which affect the office as a whole.

All of the counselors are missionaries who raise their own support from churches and individuals in their home countries, so that none of the donations go to the professional staff. Suggested

donations are charged only to cover operating expenses of rent, utilities, security, Kenyan staff, etc. Operating expenses have been proportionately divided according to the number of counselors representing each of the sponsoring organizations. The two organizations differ in how they receive their income. The AIM counselors suggest a small donation from each individual who receives services. SIL expenses are met through a portion of their missionaries' field allocation, with a similar donation being charged to non-SIL missionaries.

Future Directions

We are trusting the Lord for additional staff. We are also hoping to expand into several important areas.

Field-based pastors for the missionary community. A missionary pastor would visit various mission stations, attend field conferences, encourage ongoing spiritual growth, and focus on raising the level of mutual care within the body of Christ.

Involvement in the orientation and follow-up of new missionaries. The first months on the field for new missionaries can be a critical time, as they grieve the loss of close contact with family and go through cultural adjustments. The care by trained counselors can assist in the transition, through supportive counseling and practical workshops on life skills.

Greater encouragement of African national missionaries. The African church is becoming more involved in its own missionary efforts. Tumaini staff members desire to remain open to ways in which the center might support equipping and caring ministries within the African church.

Networking and collaboration in developing other centers on the continent. This would then make care more readily accessible to other missionaries.

Internship program. This would provide clinical field experiences and mentoring for future counselors to missionaries as they disperse throughout the world.

Mission leadership training in interpersonal and personnel management skills.

Consultation with missionaries working to develop biblically sound materials for ***training African church leaders***. The psychological, emotional, and spiritual impact of the AIDS crisis and ethnic conflicts in Africa might be a few of the areas that could be addressed.

With the blessing of much-needed additional staff, the current Tumaini facility has been stretched beyond its limit. The center has been housed in a rented four-bedroom apartment with a small rooftop office, large living room that serves as a lobby, and enclosed veranda that is a part-time seminar room/office. AIM Care has been involved in a capital development project to construct a new counseling center that would be designed to meet counseling criteria for privacy, quiet, space, and adequate parking. The center will have 10 offices, a group room, professional library, public lending library, and seminar facility. It is set on an attractive plot just outside of Nairobi, which will also offer landscaped gardens as a haven from the bustling city. The goal is to provide a counseling facility that will support missionary activities within a professional and pleasant setting.

Benefits of a Field-Based Counseling Center

There are many benefits to the missionary community from the presence of a well-organized counseling/member care center on the field.

Benefits to Mission Personnel

- Counseling is professional and godly.
- Counseling is in close proximity to the field of service for prompt care.
- Counseling on the field helps preserve the family continuity.

- Counseling on the field is more likely to be utilized.
- Counseling on the field can be cost-efficient in both finances and time.
- Counseling on the field provides care for some nationalities of missionaries who may not have counseling available in their countries of origin.
- Counselors on the field provide referrals and can facilitate inter-mission cooperation and sharing of resources and knowledge.
- Counseling provided by those who are missionaries themselves enhances insight into the struggles of missionary service.

Benefits to Mission Organizations

- A counseling center provides professional care for mission members to maximize their service and capabilities.
- It can be an attractive benefit in missionary recruitment.
- It can assist in maintaining a healthy working environment and positive attitudes.
- It can assist field administration concerning staff problems, screening, required evaluations, and personnel policies.
- It can assist in long-term staff development, leadership training, and further training for national counselors.
- It can be a change agent for growth within the mission body.

Benefits to Missions Work

- The missions community is strengthened to serve the Lord in the face of many pressing needs and struggles.
- The support from readily available counselors can protect the precious investment of a missionary's call, training, and culture and language acquisition.
- The counselors of Tumaini see themselves as encouragers of missionaries on the front lines to enable them to minister in healthy ways to their families, colleagues, and focus group.

Case Examples

The following cases are for illustrative purposes only. Although they are essentially true, the identifying features have been altered or combined in order to protect the identity of the individuals and missions involved.

Case 1

An ever-present danger for missionaries living in much of Africa is hazardous road conditions. Over the past few years, a number of missionaries have been involved in accidents, some involving significant injuries or even fatalities. Several mission organizations have made use of the Tumaini counselors for such accidents, as well as for missionaries who have inadvertently hit and injured or killed pedestrians.

Judy and Joe had invested years of effort in learning the culture and language of an unreached tribal group. Joe was tragically killed in a road accident. Judy received counseling support at Tumaini as she worked through her grief. While involved in the on-site field counseling, Judy was also able to complete a major church project, which had been a mutual effort with her husband before he died.

Case 2

Living in an isolated setting can be difficult for anyone. Many missionaries in East and Central Africa are located many hours or days away from anyone of a familiar culture.

Mary and John lived in a remote setting with their two children. They were involved in church planting and discipleship. There was a very strong religious presence (non-Christian) in this community, which they described as having a spiritually oppressive atmosphere. One day while her husband was away, a man forced his way into their home and bound Mary with ropes. In front of her children, the man made terrible threats but eventually left, after stealing a number of items.

Mary and John met with a field counselor for several sessions of debriefing and assessing the impact of this trauma. As Mary had pre-existing emotional issues that complicated her treatment, the counselor encouraged the couple to return to their home country for a medical leave of absence. While on home assignment, Mary sought professional counseling and was diagnosed with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Her treatment progressed fairly well. They were anxious to return to their field assignment and left their home country shortly after the counseling was completed, now with three children.

Work initially went well. However, Mary began to find it more and more difficult to manage her African home, care for an infant, and home school their children. Mary had a set back with her PTSD and also developed a major depression. She became incapable of functioning and was suicidal. The entire family was evacuated by plane to Nairobi so that she could be evaluated further at Tumaini. Over a course of eight weeks, Mary made significant progress. However, the family realized that they would not be able to return to their previous remote setting, in light of her need for further treatment. The family made the difficult but necessary decision to return to their home country. They expressed their gratitude to Tumaini for helping them to work through their crisis and clarify future plans.

Case 3

Mr. and Mrs. Greene served the national church in an important support capacity. Their teenage son Peter developed a significant obsessive-compulsive disorder. He spent hours daily washing his hands and was continually preoccupied with how others responded to him. Peter became depressed and at times suicidal. His parents sought treatment at Tumaini. As treatment required their close support and medication management, they relocated to Kenya for a temporary work assignment until his condition stabilized. He has done well and now receives periodic follow-up for medication management. His parents have been able to return to their previous assignment.

Case 4

Judy was a 30-year-old missionary nurse who came to Africa to work in a war-torn country whose population was facing starvation. Her organization realized the tremendous stress each of their missionaries endured under war and famine conditions and required them to come to Nairobi every six weeks for a time of debriefing and rest. Judy recognized that she was not coping well and sought counseling at Tumaini. She was able to recognize and work through her anger at the tremendous injustices around her. In addition, she and her colleagues were a part of a debriefing at Tumaini that followed a mortar shell being fired into their home. She was able to continue her work in a stressful assignment with the support of Tumaini.

Case 5

John, an 11-year-old MK, had difficulty completing his work at school and was often restless. His mother had previously home schooled him. This restlessness and inattention had not been a significant problem while he was home schooled. Now that he was attending a boarding school, it was apparent that he was also developing a problem with his peer relationships and suffering academically. At the recommendation of his teacher, his parents brought him to Tumaini for an evaluation. At that time, he was diagnosed as having an Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. The child psychiatrist at Tumaini instructed the parents and the child about this disorder, suggested behavioral interventions for the family and school, and prescribed medication. In addition, the boy was referred to an educational psychologist. Further testing revealed that John also had a learning

disorder. John's medication, school progress, and family interactions continue to be monitored at Tumaini, while his parents remain in their place of ministry.

Reflection and Discussion

1. Based on the authors' description, what are some of the main reasons for Tumaini's success?

2. Which skills and qualities are needed to work as a counselor in a field center?

3. What are some additional ways that a field missionary care center might support field missionaries or national counselors?

4. What concerns and risks should a mission organization or a group of service providers consider before establishing a field missionary care ministry as described in this chapter?

5. Where would be some strategic locations to locate missionary/member care centers?

Roger Brown *and* ***Shirley Brown*** *have worked in Nairobi, Kenya, with AIM since 1991. Roger is a physician and board certified in general psychiatry with a further specialization in child and adolescent psychiatry. He is also a graduate of Moody Bible Institute. Shirley is a registered nurse and holds a master's degree in biblical studies from Dallas Theological Seminary. Both Roger and Shirley had short-term missions experiences as singles. They have two daughters, Rachel and Hannah. Email: roger-shirley_brown@aimint.org.*

15

Awakening Pastoral Care In Latin American Missions

CHRISTOPHER SHAW

Nobody shows quite as much zeal as the person who has belatedly embraced a cause that, in days gone by, was considered of little importance or even as unnecessary. The same passion to see the gospel preached in the remotest corners of the earth, modeled for so long by nations in the northern hemisphere, has now gripped Latin America. With an enthusiasm sometimes bordering on desperation, the church has shown itself eager to make up for lost time. In the first heady rush to fill the front lines with excited young volunteers, hundreds of Latins have been sent everywhere from Peru to the Philippines. It was time to arise and shine for the Lord!

This conversion to missions, however, is a fairly recent occurrence. For years, the insistent message preached by a handful of isolated leaders throughout the continent, advocating involvement in the missionary task, fell largely on deaf ears. It was only in the 1987 missions conference sponsored by COMIBAM (Iberoamerican Missions Cooperation) in São Paulo—the first continental gathering of its kind—that a turning point was finally reached. At COMIBAM, the trumpet call to join in advancing the kingdom to the ends of the earth was sounded with unusual conviction. More than 3,500 delegates from virtually every country in Central and South America collectively understood that the region had a vital role to play in the cause of missions. The subsequent response of the church has far exceeded the expectations of many denominational leaders. Today, an estimated 4,000 Latin American missionaries from every country on the continent are serving the Lord in different parts of the world, including the 10/40 Window (Limpic, 1997).

A steady increase in the numbers of Latins leaving their countries as missionaries to other continents encourages me to believe they will soon be major partners in the task of making disciples of every nation. But learning from the struggles of the first waves of workers from this region will be important to truly impact the unreached.

A Growing Need for Pastoral Care

In the early days of this movement, it was not uncommon to hear regional leaders expounding on the particular potential that Latins possessed for missions. And there is no doubt that Latins bring a particular mix of cultural and social characteristics that make them suited to enter and serve in countries now closed to missionaries from the northern hemisphere. Confident assertions were made that the mistakes missionaries from the Older Sending Countries (OSCs) had made would not be repeated by the Latins. It was believed that a painful awareness of some of the consequences of these mistakes would be enough to ensure that Latins did not tread along the same path.

It was perhaps this feeling of over-confidence, coupled with a lack of experience, that led pastoral care to be regarded as not a very important aspect of the task before the church. The push was on to get as many people as possible recruited, trained, and out onto the field. Undoubtedly some leaders expected the Latins to advance unimpeded where others had experienced grave difficulties. A poor understanding of the cost of doing missionary work led other leaders to consider suffering on the field as the price to be paid for being involved in missions. There was little time to evaluate which suffering was avoidable and which suffering was unavoidable.

Fifteen years have elapsed since that first continental missions conference. National and regional conferences have been held throughout Latin America, and the theme of missions has become a part of the vision of many local congregations. Christians are gaining exposure to the issues related to recruiting, training, and sending missionaries, even as an ongoing number of casualties from these early days have begun to filter back to their home countries. Some organizations, based on a private survey that I conducted, have lost as many as 40% of their workers in the past decade. The worst of these cases have even turned their backs on the church.

Concern for those who have fallen by the wayside has had a sobering effect on church leaders. Uncomfortable questions beg answers from organizations that have continued to push ahead while encountering increasing problems with the missionaries working on the fields. The time is ripe for re-evaluation, as a growing awareness of the importance of pastoral care for missionaries is developing in key leaders in the region.

This growing concern can be seen in the fact that missionary conferences and gatherings in recent years have begun to include workshops and plenary sessions on offering pastoral care to those on the field. Congregational leaders are also beginning to assign members of their staff to take responsibility for this particular aspect of the missionary task. Slowly, we have seen the appearance in Christian literature of articles, brochures, and books on the subject. Efforts are being made to establish networks of caregivers who can share resources and experience with congregations, sending agencies, training schools, and other organizations involved in missions.

All of these developments are most welcome, especially if the enthusiasm of Latins for missions is not to be dampened by some of the stories of suffering and defeat coming from the field. Efforts must be redoubled to direct emerging missionary movements towards specific ways that both preventive and restorative pastoral care can be offered to those serving Christ in other countries.

Some Contributing Factors to Latin American Attrition

There are, no doubt, a whole series of factors related to some of the difficulties that Latins experience on the field. Some of these are common to missionaries the world over, and in this regard Latins have become one with generations from every people who have struggled with similar

issues throughout the history of the church. Other elements, however, are peculiar to the Latin mindset. Some of these are of special interest to those involved in pastoral care.

Pablo Carrillo (1995), for example, in a seminal article in this area, has discussed some of the major problems of Latin Americans in missions. Drawing on his 20 years of experience in several regions of the world, he lists three broad areas of problems. These struggles are still highly relevant today.

- *Problems within the worker*—deterioration in personal relationships with other workers; inability to adapt to a new culture and learn a new language; unresolved problems affecting one's emotional stability; lack of tools for spiritual survival.
- *Problems in the participating church*—lack of adequate financial resources; organizational differences; inability to help missionaries find meaningful work.
- *Problems in the mission agency*—lack of planning and strategy development; lack of cooperation with other agencies.

A Weakness in Existing Congregational Structures

Pastoral care does not come easy to many of the organizations working in missions. Latins in general are a people who have strong social ties to family, friends, and even co-workers, and relations develop within this natural network. The context for much that goes on in the local congregation, therefore, is built around providing opportunity for these ties to develop. There is an underlying conviction that problems will take care of themselves if a person has a network of support. Much of the spiritual life of the church members, therefore, revolves around attending meetings. Deliberate pastoral care is often replaced by abundant teaching provided from behind a microphone.

The strong commitment to providing as many meetings as possible for Christians and their growth interferes with the time that pastors need to provide individual care for church members. As new leaders develop, they too are pulled into the never-ending cycle of formal activities. Pastors assume that those who are serving within specific ministries naturally possess a level of maturity that makes pastoral care unnecessary. Leaders are expected to take care of their own personal needs without being cared for by their pastors.

These two aspects combine to make potential missionaries especially vulnerable when breakdown experiences occur on the field. Their traditional reliance on meetings for spiritual growth will often be replaced with a sense of isolation, as missionaries grow roots in countries where it is difficult or impossible to join existing congregations. At the same time, their own experience before leaving for the field can lead them to deny the existence of problems, struggles, and hurts in their own lives, because they assume that leaders/missionaries are not supposed to experience them. Denial is a great way to reinforce self-defeating patterns on the field, while doing nothing to deal with the underlying problem.

For example, a missionary couple on the field may begin to experience a breakdown in their marital relationship, or they may face issues of conflict arising with team members. Whereas the appropriate course of action might be to stop and address these problems or even seek help from leaders back home before things deteriorate beyond control, this couple may feel that anything not specifically related to their "missionary" task is of a lesser concern. They might thus "sit tight" and hope that the problems will not interfere with their work, or even that the Lord will take care of things as they demonstrate their loyalty to His service. Their experience and training have simply not prepared them to deal correctly with these or a host of other problems they may face on the field.

An Emphasis on Individual Effort

The fact that many leaders choose or are pressured into ministry responsibilities without adequate support often leads to ministers becoming overly concerned with protecting their own interests. In the absence of adequate pastoral care, many feel that they must ensure success by their own means. This leads to a strengthening of individualism in the leaders themselves. Others in ministry are frequently viewed as potential competitors for scarce resources. Each person must move forward as best as possible while taking care that others do not threaten their personal projects. Cultural gravitation towards strong, authoritarian types of leaders aggravates the situation. This attitude is not only prevalent in many individuals involved in ministry, but it can also be found in hundreds of congregations throughout the continent. Strong denominational pressure has often led different congregations to view others outside the intimate circle of relationships with attitudes of suspicion or even hostility.

Although much has happened in recent years to break down some of the stronger barriers dividing different groups, Latins in general are not well-equipped to work in teams. The strong emphasis on individual effort is not conducive to dialogue or negotiation. Disagreement is sometimes seen as an attitude of open rebellion towards those who are in authority. With this kind of background, it is not surprising that many conflicts in the lives of missionaries develop quickly on the field. As missionaries are put in teams in a variety of destinations, they find that differences with other team members become major obstacles to ministry. The tools for conflict resolution are not always available, and the tensions rise to intolerable levels as individual members compete for primacy within the team structure.

This particular difficulty holds an element of irony to it, for it is also a strong inclination to developing relationships that stands out as a quality in the lives of many Latins. It is when these relationships are taken to a level where deep exchanges of ideas and passions occur that conflicts arise. A potential strength, therefore, loses its value for enhancing the missionary experience. Again, Latins need to learn how to take this quality to greater depths than they would normally experience within the framework of the local congregation.

A Shortened Training Experience

A general tendency to move away from the more formal, academic models of training has become common in Latin America. A large part of the effort is to find more personal, relevant, and efficient ways to train missionaries. The new models which have arisen have paid much more attention to such things as character development, community experience, and practical training in evangelism, church planting, and discipleship. These changes have brought much-needed renewal to the whole area of ministry preparation. The changes, however, have also tended to reduce drastically the time allotted to training. The four-year course traditionally advocated by formal institutions has been replaced by highly compressed training experiences that may last as little as four months. Although these programs are often part of a larger project where a practical field experience is necessary, this latter part of the training often lacks the supervision needed to make it an effective learning experience.

The rushed nature of much of this training usually means less time to identify and deal correctly with issues in the lives of candidates that will most certainly cause problems on the field. An alarming number of candidates with a desperate need for inner healing or with serious character problems are being allowed to leave without receiving adequate ministry. These untreated areas of their lives come to the fore under the normal pressures of the field, often when it is very difficult to reach them with adequate help.

A Low Commitment to Pastoral Care

As previously noted, congregational leaders are often hard pressed to provide pastoral care for their own people at home. A lack of resources and time, inadequate training, and a host of other factors contribute to the poor quality of pastoral care in many congregations. But even more important than these elements is the fact that there is much pressure in Evangelical circles to provide proof of effective ministries through numerical increases in church attendance. Literature highlighting the glittery ministries of mega-churches in different parts of the world has spawned countless imitators throughout Latin America. This means that much effort is spent on seeking to enlarge congregations without providing the adequate support structures to ensure that new converts develop into mature disciples of Christ.

This particular focus of pastoral work often transfers to the missionaries who are working on the field. Teams who have been sent out to difficult countries feel a particular sense of frustration as their efforts to develop growing congregations produce pitifully small results by comparison with their home churches. Even when the missionaries themselves begin to understand that they are in a setting where the rules are different, it is difficult for the sending congregations to grasp the same concept. Because of this, it is often hard for denominational leaders to understand how missionaries can be experiencing personal problems or team conflicts when they seem to be doing so very little on the field. As well as this, the few resources available for the cause of missions seem to be ill-spent if they are not directed at activities that make a significant contribution to the cause of spreading the gospel. To invest time and money in providing pastoral care for the missionaries on the field is not always understood as a good investment by the church leaders.

When missionaries return home, they are naturally received with great expectation and are invited on whirlwind tours to recount their experiences on the field. They are expected to provide "rewarding" results to supporters, to motivate and mobilize new candidates for the cause, and to secure further support for the future. A long list of engagements is often planned for them well in advance of their return home. People do not expect to hear from missionaries that they are hurting, frustrated, or angry. The same denial that has been a problem on the field accompanies them back home. It is rare, therefore, to find a congregation that takes time for debriefing or that helps missionaries to work through some of their pain and reentry needs.

Too Few Resources

Even when church and mission leaders fully understand the need for providing pastoral care, they often run into a frustrating lack of resources that make every move in this direction difficult. Funds are usually already stretched to the limit and often scarcely cover the basic needs of those who are on the field. Lack of funds, however, is not the only problem. There is also only a handful of men and women who are gifted and equipped to offer the right kind of pastoral care overseas. Missionaries often complain that in the few visits they do get, the people visiting them are more interested in tourism than in ministering to their needs.

The experience of the past decade, therefore, provides an emerging picture of the kind of person who is needed for this work. First, people are needed who can actually get out onto the field. These are people with strong pastoral gifts, with a special orientation to the healing of emotional wounds and the resolution of interpersonal conflicts. Second, age is also important. Latin missionaries often relate better to older people who can also provide a father/mother figure from which they can receive comfort and support in times of crisis.

These characteristics often leave out a number of people who could help but are lacking the experiential framework to be able to make a significant contribution in this area. Even when this reduced group of people can be identified, there remains the ever-present problem of raising the funds to mobilize them and get them to the right places when needed. Personal time constraints have to be considered, as some of these people may have job responsibilities from which they cannot easily take leave.

Creative Ways to Provide and Develop Pastoral Care

The particular mix of challenges that have been outlined in my previous comments calls for a special quota of creativity in resolving the issue of pastoral care for missionaries. It seemed unimaginable two decades ago to be speaking of Latins as major partners in missions. Yet today they have become important participants in the process, enriching the experience of the missionary community in many parts of the world. The unthinkable actually materializing encourages us to admit no defeat when thinking about pastoral care. The flow of missionaries out of Latin America *must* continue. While encouraging Latins to rise up and take their place in the Lord's harvest, we must not cease in our efforts to build into this movement the support structures necessary for the healthy pastoral care of its laborers. As our experience grows, so too will we become wiser about the ways in which we can take better care of our missionaries.

The doors are obviously closed to pursuing the comprehensive kind of pastoral care offered by many organizations in the OSCs. These nations enjoy the advantages of long experience in the equipping and sending of missionaries, as well as the solid financial situation of their home economies. The approach to pastoral care shown by many organizations in the northern hemisphere testifies to the particular characteristics of their own cultures, such as strong emphasis on holistic models of ministry, avoiding burnout through balanced priorities, conflict resolution through team dialogue, and the sense of security that comes from strong financial support. The Lord has blessed them within this context.

Latin Americans are very new to the world of missions, and they bring with them a whole new mindset with its own set of cultural traits. It is, therefore, a wonderful time to explore and find the means to care for missionaries, especially in ways suited to Latins. So how creative and culturally relevant can we Latin Americans be? Here are some ideas.

Training Teams for Pastoral Care

It is common to insist that people who will provide pastoral care should have themselves had experience in some field. The principle is sound, for surely nobody can understand the particular needs of missionaries better than those who have experienced firsthand what it means to be a missionary. It does not always follow, however, that a person with mission experience is capable of providing adequate pastoral care for other missionaries. In truth, providing pastoral care for missionaries has much more to do with giftedness than with the experience, though there is definitely a plus to possessing the latter.

A more serious problem with this principle, however, is that years will go by before there is a sufficiently large pool of Latin people with missions experience available to help in this area. The need for adequate pastoral care is urgent today and therefore requires immediate steps. The required skills, like the needs themselves, are extensive: team building, conflict resolution, marriage enrichment, children's education, family life, crisis care, stress management, and so on. An interesting alternative may be to include training in pastoral care as part of the overall missions program of a denomination or organization. Such training need not rely on centralized programs but could

also be delivered through extension/correspondence courses, although ongoing hands-on experience and supervision are usually needed.

It seems to me that a good way forward would be to carefully select small groups of people to be equipped and exposed to the particular needs of those who are serving on the field in different parts of the world. The selection could be done by those involved in providing pastoral care today, in conjunction with church/agency leaders and field leaders. Initially this program would concentrate on giving these people tools to develop basic counseling skills, providing practical experience within the local church setting. Eventually these people could travel with missionary leaders and caregivers to become familiar with field conditions. The process of developing this team of ministers would take time, but it would be a definite improvement on requiring the exhausted handful of people currently taking care of missionaries to continue shouldering all the burden indefinitely. As in all pioneer situations, the early stages of development are the ones that take the greatest amount of energy and effort.

Ideally, such a team of people would become part of a growing network of pastoral caregivers available to a wide range of missionary organizations. Those sending agencies or congregations not able to provide adequate care could use the services of such a team. Less experienced caregivers in the team could be called on to make routine visits to different fields, while the crisis situations could be left to those who have more experience.

Creating Awareness in Local Churches

A second area where much work can be done is in helping local church leaders to understand the need for pastoral care of their missionaries. Those with a burden for the pastoral care of missionaries would have to work alongside the recruiting and sending agencies, taking advantage of the natural bridges that exist to the local church to bring awareness to missionary leaders and pastors. Congregations that are involved in mission projects can be informed about the stress and difficulties, the trials as well as the joys and accomplishments, that many missionaries experience on the field. Seminars, literature, and personal talks with the leaders responsible for the missionaries will go a long way towards helping local congregations understand in what ways they can be particularly useful in supporting their people serving in other regions. Even where there is little literature on the topic, simple articles can be extremely useful in helping leaders who know very little about the subject, and who are generally surprised to hear that missionaries often experience breakdowns on the field.

Mission agencies can help sending congregations to understand some of the specific needs that returning missionaries have. Through careful planning, those who return can be shielded from the effects that a well-meaning, though otherwise insensitive congregation can have on their missionaries. Special training is not needed for this. Some basic guidelines can be very useful in providing the necessary tools for church leaders to be instruments of healing and blessing in the hands of God.

Making Pastoral Care a Part of Training

Training has made enormous steps in moving away from highly intellectual models that leave the heart untouched. Community living often gives candidates a foretaste of what it will mean to live and work with a team of people on the field. An emphasis on the devotional life helps develop some of the habits that will be much in need on the field.

The most significant aspect of the new training models, though, is that it often provides firsthand knowledge of problem areas and character weaknesses in the lives of candidates. These priceless insights are too valuable to let slip by without more than a cursory observation by training

leaders. Often these particular weaknesses, such as lack of discipline, inability to work in a team, unresolved conflicts from the past, or inability to accept orders or submit to a set of rules, are only patched up sufficiently for the candidate to reach the field.

Instead of concentrating so much effort in overloading candidates with information on a whole variety of topics related to the missionary experience—which they hardly can understand because they do not have the experiential framework with which to interpret it—time could be better used if candidates were not only ministered to in a more personal way, but also helped to reflect on the process of resolving personal problems and interpersonal conflicts. In one program I have been involved with, for example, the very nature of the intense schedules—with very little free time—tends to separate couples from one another and rob them of valuable time for sharing together during the training process. Unwittingly, we are setting them up to continue with this pattern on the field, instead of teaching vital skills in caring for their marital relationship.

The presence, therefore, of qualified pastoral staff during part or all of the training experience is essential. These people could be fully devoted to helping candidates work through these issues, even while the program leaders continue to work on developing other traits important for the missionary task. Unfortunately, trainers often expect the process of healing and conflict resolution to take place on its own, simply because people are thrown together to share the same experience for a period of time.

Training should also provide candidates with a basic understanding of the mechanisms needed to resolve conflict situations in their own and in group settings. Those candidates who show the right qualities to provide adequate pastoral care could be further equipped with the basic tools needed to provide pastoral care for other team members. In this way, missionaries would be better equipped to deal with stress and interpersonal conflicts without outside help.

Sharing Resources

The resources available in NSCs for pastoral care may be relatively scarce, but this can and will, I believe, change. History leaves us this valuable lesson, however. The success of the missionary task has never depended on the abundance of available resources, but rather on the wise and intelligent use of whatever was available—more often than not, very little, "so that His grace may be sufficient in us, for His strength is made perfect in our weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9). In this sense, we Latins are exceedingly well-equipped to take on our missionary role! And, indeed, many Latins have once again placed faith—a realistic, informed faith—at the center of their missionary endeavors.

I am convinced that it is not so much a matter of resources, but rather of creating sensitivity in the body of Christ towards the needs of the workers in front-line trenches. It is a matter of seeking ways to bring about the natural caring that should exist within the church. Once the sensitivity exists, the resources will be mobilized much more readily.

I envision congregations and organizations involved in better recruiting practices, equipping and sending laborers to the field who are healthier and better prepared. But to do this, we must lay aside the inherited tendency to work alone and instead team up with others who have similar interests and needs to our own. The pool of pastoral experience and resources is growing and must be shared between groups. Attitudes of suspicion or self-serving plans must become a defunct cultural accretion from the church's past. We must continue to create networks of mutual cooperation, including networks of counselors, trainers, debriefers, an affiliation of caregivers, and missionary care consultations.

The availability of a network in itself, though, will rarely convince pastors and leaders to make use of the resources of-

fered. In the context of Latin culture, it is the personal recommendation that goes a long way to break down mistrust and hesitation in approaching others. Encouraging leaders to make use of a network in the region will therefore depend largely on the endorsement of key leaders who have access to different parts of the missions community. These leaders must take advantage of their natural contacts and the authority that they have within the community to introduce leaders to new individuals who can contribute in offering pastoral care in given situations without being committed to any one group alone.

This kind of resource sharing will take time to build. Yet it is the only way forward in a continent where the level of poverty in the population is increasing year by year and where the possibilities of small, individual missionary ventures become increasingly difficult. Such adversity, though, rather than a hindrance, is an opportunity for unprecedented generosity and growth. What a wonderful moment to ignore the tug of selfishness and explore the unlimited resources of the whole of the body of Christ!

Conclusion

For years, we Latins saw ourselves as a missionary field, the target of the missionary projects of other nations. Indeed, we often convinced ourselves that we had little to contribute to the spread of the gospel to the ends of the earth, and we grew used to the idea that mission was something that others did. The last two decades have brought wonderfully good news to the church in our region. We too can be missionaries! How exciting it has been to see a whole army of people begin to share long-treasured dreams of serving Christ in other lands and slowly witness the coming about of these dreams.

The way forward has been filled with all sorts of experiences, both good and bad. In our youthful eagerness, we have made many mistakes. But we are rapidly growing up, and we hope to capitalize on all that we have experienced to this point. One thing is clear to us: there is no turning back. We have joined the great missionary enterprise, and we intend to make that particular contribution for which God created us Latins!

Reflection and Discussion

1. The experience of the church in Latin America has been one of rapid growth. The same is true for the flow of Latin missionaries leaving for other fields. What steps need to be taken to ensure that this progress does not ride on the wings of enthusiasm alone?

2. Communication and effective links with the sending church are vital to help missionaries fight off the feeling of loneliness on the field. In what ways can a local congregation with a limited budget work to keep these links healthy?

3. If you were asked to head up a project to develop a team of caregivers throughout Latin America, how would you go about developing such a project? What specific steps would you take to get the project started?

4. The need for literature on pastoral care, from a Latin American perspective, is great. What are some ways in which regional member care workers and mission leaders could be involved in producing the kind of literature which would be helpful to all those working with missions projects?

5. Training new missionaries is essential to the task ahead. Some of the pitfalls in both traditional and new models of missionary development have been outlined in this chapter. What elements would you consider vital to include in the missionary training experience, if you were trying to practice preventive pastoral care?

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Christopher Shaw *was born and raised in Argentina. He graduated from the Buenos Aires Bible Institute in 1982, and later completed a doctorate in missiology at Fuller Theological Seminary, in California. He has been involved in pastoral ministry for over 20 years. Since 1992, Christopher has been involved as a guest lecturer with Kairos, a Brazilian missionary agency which recruits, trains, and sends Latins to work among the poor in the great urban centers of the world. In offering support to graduates who are on the field, he has traveled to Peru, Chile, Spain, and the Philippines. He is the author of several articles on the subject of character development and pastoral care of missionaries. Christopher is married to Iris, and they have three children. He currently lives in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Email: fliashaw@sinectis.com.ar.*

Pastoral Care From Latin America: Some Suggestions For Sending Churches

PABLO CARRILLO LUNA

The Latin sending churches play a crucial role in supporting their workers well. Here are some reflections and suggestions on pastoral care from an experienced Latin leader.

The cross-cultural mission movement from Latin America is not older than 35 years, if we start counting when the Latins first went overseas on different mission assignments. Like all new missionary movements, it is full of strength and has loads of enthusiasm but is lacking in experience. At this point in the history of our missions work, it is necessary to revisit our biblical foundations in order to make sure that they are solid. So it is helpful to pause now for some reflections as we face the task in this century. We want to clarify our theological basis for missions. In addition, we want to continue to develop our cross-cultural understanding, ministry skills, enthusiasm, and goodwill.

How do we understand the mission of the Latin American church? It seems to me that the way we are answering this question is at the root of many of the problems that Latin workers face on the mission field.

Limitations in Our Understanding of Mission

It is interesting to observe the way a young missionary candidate might respond to the appeals made at local mission conferences. Often without the knowledge of the church leadership and many times without the parents' consent, a decision is made to go to the ends of the earth with the message of the gospel. Being a person who has been there myself and done that very thing many times, and who has interviewed hundreds of young Latin candidates during the last 18 years, let me point out two main areas of concern about this approach for missions involvement. First, it is the wrong way of recruiting for missions, and second, it involves the wrong motivations in some of these young people.

We have relentlessly used a couple of verses which we consider to be the ones that best express the mission of the Lord: in the Old Testament, Isaiah 6:8 ("Here I am. Send me!"), and in the New Testament, Matthew 28:18-20 ("Go into all the world…"). If these verses are the primary ones that we emphasize, no wonder people are reluctant to respond to the missionary call. Or those who do respond end up with an incomplete understanding of what the mission is all about. There is so much more to missions and to Scripture! We need to look for a fresh approach to reviewing and presenting the *entire* Scriptures. We also must try to rediscover what the Spirit is saying to the Latin church on the matter of reaching the nations and obeying God's will. May true knowledge be added to our well-intentioned zeal!

The missionary conference is still the main motivational platform to recruit young candidates for the mission task. The problem with this model is that the people who often respond to the missions summons in these conferences are the *sanguines*, the more emotional and spontaneous. The *phlegmatic*s, who seem better suited for the long haul, do not respond to all the emotional hype. I know this is a general statement, but in many cases I have seen it to be accurate.

Moreover, when some candidates try to explain why they want to go to certain places, the answer is often, "I feel called." Having such a "call" usually translates into the message, "This is the end of the discussion, and anyone probing more into this call might be found to be contradicting the Lord!" Of course, there is a subjective element in a missionary call, but God has also provided objective ways of confirming His word. In the New Testament, that confirmation always came through the local church. It is very rare—and I think non-existent, frankly—to find a person being called to a mission task without someone from the church, often a person in a leadership position, confirming that call. Even the Apostle Paul, who received his unmistakable call on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:3-7), later submitted to objective screening by members of the church (Acts 9:10-18, 27, 30; 13:1-3).

In general, the least becoming idea of "mission" that we have in Latin America is that of an organization—many times a foreign one—that comes to snatch our young people from the local churches in order to do the missionary task. Later, that same missionary organization comes to our church to ask for money to support these same young people. It is a way of doing missions in which the local church adopts a *passive* role and the mission agency the *active* one. We urgently need more reflection in the church on the function and reason of being the church. We need a serious study on the *ecclesia* and her true identity in the midst of a postmodern world.

Some Struggles for Latin Americans on the Field

Many struggles that the missionary faces on the field are a direct result of minimal missions understanding in the Latin church. For example, the lack of finances for missionary support in some cases is because the church is not totally convinced of the missionary task. In other cases, it stems from the entrepreneurial approach to missions, whereby the local church demands results, numbers, and a return in the investment. That puts pressure on the missionary to perform, with the likely result of a fruitless and stressful activism, accompanied by exaggerated prayer reports from the field. Sometimes guilt and depression are the symptoms of not being able to perform to expectations from back home.

Fortunately, some of the Latin missionaries have seen improvement in this area through diversifying their constituency and through redefining their mission task as new opportunities open for them on the field. Realistic approaches to building relationships and obtaining "results" are being taken more frequently among Latins. But this does not solve the ongoing

lack of understanding of the mission task on the part of the local church. Orientation about missions and visits to the field by the church leadership are some practical solutions.

Another recent issue is that of children's education on the field. As the Latin American missions movement develops, so do the families that comprise it. Missionary *families* have thus become a growing part of the missions scene. The presence and needs of children have begun to affect the capability of some people to stay on the field. Following the lead of other sending countries, one strategy has been to bring a Latin teacher for a short-term commitment until a more definite solution is found. Another option is to consider home-schooling, yet this must be carefully reviewed, since it is still such a "foreign" practice and might not be recognized by the education authorities back in one's home country. In general, most of the workers have mainstreamed their children in local schools or, in some cases, in schools which use a more international language, such as French or English. However, the implications of sending a family with older children to an area where the education options are few needs to be considered before the family steps into the airplane. The home-based mission agencies and local Latin churches need orientation in this area from some experienced Latins.

One of the most significant problems has been that of convincing some of the local churches to provide medical insurance for their missionaries. Back home, local pastors hardly have such coverage themselves. Hence, how can they afford to pay insurance for some young missionaries from the same church? There are no quick solutions, and the expected time of departure of some candidates is often delayed until this item is fully covered by some other source. Many missionaries choose to go to the field with no medical insurance. There are many risks in sending people to politically unstable and volatile countries even with full medical and life insurance. However, these hard decisions must be seriously considered by the church and the candidates before leaving for the field. The question is: Are they aware of the total implications of this decision? Who will help them to understand the risks?

Church Orientation and Involvement

It is clear that many problems that Latin workers face on the field could be solved before they leave for their missionary assignments. A healthy local church is the key place to address these issues.

If the recruitment is done carelessly or without the church leadership's approval and significant involvement, we will continue with some of the same old problems. Workers will go out with inadequate preparation, they will struggle to relate to and respect their colleagues, they will not discipline themselves to learn the local language, and they will misunderstand spiritual authority and be hesitant to submit to leadership. The church in which biblical community is practiced is the best place to assess the emotional and spiritual stability of candidates. Questionnaires and interviews from sending agencies have their place too, of course, but nothing is better than observing someone's behavior and growth over time.

If the church or denomination allocates in the budget an adequate amount for the support of their candidates, the financial stress would be reduced considerably. The sending base should be open to cooperate with the rest of the body of Christ too. The antithesis to this would be repeating the "old" ways of denominational parochialism, which in the name of guarding "sound" doctrine seeks to reproduce replicas of itself in the resulting field churches. Lack of cooperation gives birth to lone rangers and isolated missionaries.

Some Helpful Directions

In a previous article on this subject, I overviewed three main areas of struggle for Latin American missionaries (Carrillo, 1995). These areas were the missionaries themselves, the sending church, and the mission agency. These are not three separate entities having isolated problems. Yet as I have pointed out in this chapter, it is in the church where we can see both the source and the solution of many problems that the Latin worker faces.

Needless to say, there is a glaring need to provide basic and specific orientation as to how to go about doing the missionary task. The role of the local church is more important than we have allowed in theory and practice. The sending church should be aware that the missionary task is to be done with excellence, as unto the Lord Himself. Part of excellence involves clearly defining the biblical basis for missions as well as the common issues facing Latin countries. The orientation program should include some basic information regarding the mission fields to be reached, the missionary project being undertaken, job expectations for the workers, expectations and commitments of the sending groups, and the type of accountability. There are already several training courses and well-meaning systematic approaches available. These in my experience tend to be very pragmatically oriented, yet they do not adequately address the Latin American context or the questions that the Latin church is raising.

One practical tool to help church leaders understand the biblical basis of missions and the practical steps in sending out workers is the Raymond Lull Seminar (SRL). Ramon Lull, one of the first proponents of missions to the Muslim world, lived in Spain in the 14th–15th centuries. This seminar bearing his name was birthed while we were trying to develop a pastoral care program for Latin workers in restricted areas. We first discovered that some of the usual approaches among the Older Sending Countries were irrelevant to the growing numbers of Latin workers, many of whom were coming on their own with minimal advice about what to expect. They started to return frustrated to their home churches. The churches then questioned what went wrong and who was to blame, and there was much discouragement.

The seminar is structured in three main sections. The first section reviews the *biblical and historical foundations of mission*. The idea is to help the Latin leaders and candidates maintain the biblical perspective and to be faithful and sensitive to what the Lord is trying to say to us. Moreover, we do not need to re-invent the wheel but rather need to learn from mission history and from our predecessors. The second section of the seminar deals with the *world of Islam*, emphasizing the necessity for understanding the peoples we are trying to reach with the gospel and their felt needs. The third section comes to grips with the *practice of mission*. In order for the Latin church to assume her responsibilities in the missionary task, it is necessary to understand what the missionary process is and the role of the church and the candidate.

SRL is our response to the problem, and the enthusiastic reception to the first presentations in Chile, Argentina, and Mexico has confirmed that there is a need for such a tool and that the seminar is the right tool to address the problem. SRL fills a critical need of the Latin American church at this crucial time in her growth.

It is not too late to avoid more casualties and the discouragement that the churches will experience in their mission work. We sense the Lord is moving the Latin church at this time to responsibly embrace her role in world missions, but the church needs to be assisted in a wise way. There is now enough experience among seasoned Latin missionaries and leaders to provide significant help.

Reflection and Discussion

1. List some of the main challenges that the author mentions for Latin sending churches. How do these challenges compare to those from your own sending church/country?

2. What are a few practical ways that a sending church can cooperate with a sending agency in supporting the mission personnel that they both send out?

3. How would you begin to plan for a coordinated effort to orient the Latin American church concerning missions involvement?

4. Compare and contrast some of the Latin American issues/struggles for field care with those from the Older Sending Countries.

5. What are some other ways to recruit Christian young people into missions besides missions conferences?

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Pablo Carrillo Luna *was born in Mexico City. He has a Bachelor of Science in industrial engineering from the Instituto Politécnico Nacional. He was involved with OM in the Middle East, North Africa, and Spain from 1971 to 1974. Pablo is married to Jane, and they have three children: Natasha, 24, Yusef, 20, and Yamila, 18. They have made Granada, Spain, their base of operations since 1979. Founder and former President of PM Internacional, Pablo is at present developing the Raymond Lull Seminar, a tool designed to give orientation and to encourage biblical reflection on the Latin mission to the Muslim world. Email: saulus1030@cs.com.*

Special thanks Jane Carrillo for her helpful review of this article, as well as other colleagues who have helped shape my thinking in this area: Marcos Amado, President of PMI; Tim Halls; and Susana Malcolm.

Note: This article builds upon the author's previous article in the special member care issue of the ***International Journal of Frontier Missions*** *(1995, vol. 12, pp. 195-198), "Struggles of Latin Americans in Frontier Missions."*

Preparing to Persevere In Brazilian Missions

MÁRCIA TOSTES

"Blessed, happy, to be envied is the man who is patient under trial and stands up under temptation, for when he has stood the test and been approved, he will receive the victor's crown of life which God has promised to those who love Him" (James 1:12, Amplified). This chapter looks at how this verse is becoming a reality in the lives of mission personnel from Brazil. The author offers practical encouragement on how the Brazilian church can take the next step forward—the step of perseverance—in its global missions efforts.

"My goodness, how luxurious your suitcase is!"

"Well, you are welcome to have this suitcase if you are ready to go through all I went through in order to have it."

Such was the brief exchange between a Brazilian missionary and a member of a church she was visiting on her deputation program, as her host unloaded the car. The suitcase, in fact, was quite impressive, especially when compared to the ones that missionaries used to have. That man, though, was getting the wrong idea that missionary life was very easy. The suitcase had actually been a gift of the Brazilian consulate to that missionary as she and three other missionaries arrived for a brief stay in Portugal, worn out after the long process of negotiation for their release. They had spent eight months as hostages in an African city that had been taken by rebels.

The four missionaries had the chance to leave as others did on the day of the occupation. They decided to remain, though, convinced that God wanted them to stay. At the moment of their quick decision, they could not foresee all they would have to go through. The righteous will live by faith, for sure, but was this being naïve and presumptuous, or was it courageous and wise?

Fortunately, some days before the attack, the Brazilian missionary had received a large shipment of medicines. As the local people were hurt, she was able to care for them, and the church became a center for help, hope, and safety. The missionary became a leader in that time of horror. Miraculously, several individuals were healed with the simple treatments she provided, even when the injured required much more help, such as amputation of limbs.

One day during an attack, many people swarmed into the church, filled with fear and desperation. The mission-

ary had to cry out in a commanding voice, "Lie down, lie down." She then turned her head so that nobody could see the tears that were streaming from her eyes.

Attack followed attack, and some of the missionary's friends fell wounded or lifeless close by her. The cries of those people remained vivid in her mind, along with other horrible memories, long after her safe return eight months later to her home country. She lost weight, and she wrestled with the relentless question, "Could I have done anything else to have saved these people?"

Negotiations were made with the help of the United Nations, and the missionary and some other hostages were released. The four missionaries were then carefully taken out of the country, with just the clothes they were wearing. Because of their poor health, they spent three days in Cabo Verde for medical help. Next was a week in Portugal, where they received care from the Brazilian consulate to help them recuperate further before traveling on to Brazil. It was at that time that they each received nice clothes along with a new suitcase. What a price to pay for a stylish suitcase!

As I reflect on this story, two questions come to my mind. First, was this Brazilian missionary adequately prepared for this experience? And the corollary, are our other missionaries prepared for what they are going to face? In this chapter, I will look at these questions by reviewing how pastoral care is developing in the Brazilian missionary movement. I will also reflect on how far we have come and what else we need to do.

Review of Brazilian Missions and Member Care

The Brazilian missionary movement is relatively new, especially when compared to that of the Older Sending Countries. The oldest Evangelical Brazilian missionary agency, Antioch Mission, was founded in 1976. Nevertheless, our history is already full of beautiful stories, many of which contain accounts of suffering. Missionaries often just persevered without fully understanding the kind of suffering they were going through.

In the beginning of the movement, missionaries were sent out almost as one sends a parcel in the mail. In some ways, it seems that this was the price that zealous but missions-inexperienced Christians had to pay in order to build a foundation. These early missionaries—like the current ones—needed a lot of faith to be able to overcome things like the lack of financial support, the unknown, culture shock, and difficult communication between the home country and the field. Many of those who were sent in the beginning persevered, and they are still on the field today, 20 years later. But some were seemingly not strong enough and had to return. Nowadays there are still many missionaries being sent out without adequate care. These people and those connected with them continue to pay a high price.

The growth of the church in Asia, Africa, and Latin America has been tremendous. There are more Evangelicals in these regions than in North America and Europe. The increasing number of mission personnel being sent from these regions is also amazing. In Latin America, the missions movement came into full view in 1987, when a large congress (COMIBAM 87—Iberoamerican Missions Cooperation) was held in São Paulo, Brazil. Over 3,000 delegates attended. One of the main purposes was to discuss how Latin Americans could be more involved in world evangelization.

After this congress, much happened. Many other missionary conferences were held, new missions began, and many missionaries were sent. After 10 years of work, another congress (COMIBAM 97) was convened in Acapulco, Mexico. Here, over 3,000 mission personnel and church leaders evaluated what had transpired and considered future opportunities. Balance and realistic appraisals were sought. Yes, a lot had happened in terms of sending

missionaries, but some mistakes had also been revealed. One of the main errors was that many missionaries had been sent out without proper preparation and without enough care in the field.

Somewhere in the midst of such excitement, with the church rejoicing in being part of such a great work, a distressing estimate was circulated that three out of every four missionaries from Brazil remained less than five years on the field. This news got our attention! Research on missionary attrition in Brazil was then conducted in 1995 by Ted Limpic with SEPAL/OC International, together with the World Evangelical Alliance's Missions Commission. The new and more carefully researched estimate was considerably lower, but it was still worrying. Some 7% of the missionaries from Brazil were returning home each year for various reasons, not too far from the 5% average figure for other countries in the study.

This research also explored the reasons that missionaries were leaving the field. The findings are discussed at length in the book *Too Valuable to Lose*, edited by Bill Taylor and translated into Portuguese and Spanish (Taylor, 1998). Among the principal reasons for the premature return of missionaries sent from Brazil were personal problems which were related to the character of the missionary.

These findings made an impact on the mission movement in Brazil. Three organizations—the Brazilian Association of Transcultural Missions (AMTB), the Brazilian Association of Mission Teachers (APMB), and the Association of Church Mission Departments (ACMI)—began to discuss openly the issues of missionary care and attrition, via articles, presentations, and consultations.

Two interagency member care affiliations were also subsequently formed. The first one was started in 1999 and focuses on Brazilian missions. This group has the aim of raising pastoral care awareness among the sending churches and agencies, giving specific training in pastoral care areas and also offering specialized help through professionals who understand the needs of missionaries. The Brazilian group is also linked to the second affiliation, the Pastoral Care Program of COMIBAM.

The aim of the COMIBAM program is to help the national mission movements in Iberoamerica develop member care resources in their own countries, through appropriate literature, consultations, and communicating/sharing experiences. In October 2000, the first continental pastoral care consultation took place, held in Lima, Peru. This resulted in the formation of a working group which oversees and develops the objectives of the Pastoral Care Program.

The result of all this understanding and activity regarding pastoral care is that there is no turning back. Sending churches and mission agencies are becoming more aware of the care that is needed from recruitment through retirement.

A Proposed Model of Missionary Care

Here is a three-stage model of missionary care currently being used by many mission groups as a framework for understanding missions. It spans the life cycle of the missionary and his/her family, focusing on the supportive care and training needed during pre-field, on-field, and post-field stages. It emphasizes the coordinated care that the local church, training center, and agency need to provide. There is also a growing appreciation for the place of the mental health professional and cross-cultural trainer.

Pre-Field

This stage includes the selection process, logistical help to secure visas and medical insurance if possible, and preparation/orientation to develop emotional, physical, theological, and missiological areas. Antioch Mission, for example, accepts candidates who are involved in their

local churches and recommended by their pastors. In the Mission Training Course, there are classes, presentations, and exams to assess whether the candidates are emotionally prepared to face stressful situations. This is a sifting process which releases some to go and requires others to take more time to develop their skills and/or deal with things from the past. Better to grow now at home than to fall apart later on the field. Some missionary organizations in Brazil, such as Kairos and Antioch Mission, require their candidates to go through an intermediate transcultural experience prior to placement on the field. In this setting, candidates are exposed to stressors that are similar to those in their future field locations.

On-Field

Live and learn, as the saying goes. We Brazilians have learned firsthand how much missionaries on the field need supervision and pastoral care. We are making strides in a number of areas through the involvement of field leaders within the regions, visits from leaders from the sending country, organizing retreats, email communication and phone calls, and encouraging the sense of community and mutual support among missionaries themselves. It is important for missionaries to know that people back home and on the field care about them. They are not forgotten.

Post-Field

The needs of missionaries and their children during reentry are being better understood, wheher the reentry is for a brief return, furlough, retirement, or end of service. Supportive care includes housing arrangements, transportation, health and medical check-ups/treatment, educational options for children, and debriefing. It is also very important to help the missionary think ahead and make proper arrangements for pension and retirement.

A Step Forward

Another concern, in addition to those mentioned above, is increasingly tugging at our hearts: *Are we preparing our candidates to persevere?* This concern was the subject of a master's thesis by a well-known mission teacher in Brazil, Margaretha Adiwardana (1999). It was presented at the Brazilian Mission Teachers Association Consultation in April 2000.

It is hard to say whether we as a Newer Sending Country are in our infancy or adolescence with regards to the development of missionary care. Possibly we are somewhere in between. We feel it is time for us to take the next step forward. All that we have learned and tried to apply in terms of missionary care is essential, but we need to go further. We need to train our workers to persevere through suffering and difficulties, as faithful witnesses of Jesus Christ.

First of all, candidates need to have a biblical understanding of suffering. This subject can be taught from many texts in the Bible, such as 1 Peter 4:12-19. Peter understood that suffering for Christ was normal and that suffering is part of the Christian experience. Christ suffered, and the invitation He makes to His followers is to share with Him in this. It is totally contrary to what the world teaches, and it can come as a shock to us who are not at all used to suffering. "For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake shall find it" (Matt. 16:25).

Our candidates come from a generation in which enduring through suffering without giving up is not the order of the day. Being from a developing country does not necessarily mean that one is able to handle life's challenges any better. Many candidates have never experienced significant suffering in their lives. Wars, floods, oppression, and other extreme stressors are part of the news that comes from "far away."

Brazilian culture, speaking in general terms, has a high regard for beauty and the enjoyment of life. The "here and now" is usually more important than planning ahead. Even though there is suffering, especially due to widespread poverty, a Brazilian person takes life as it comes, making jokes of his/her own condition. This way of seeing life can help a person to adapt to new situations. Yet this approach will not usually serve the Brazilian missionary so well, especially in places where poverty is devastating, made worse by natural catastrophes such as droughts, floods, and earthquakes, as well as by manmade disasters such as wars and oppression.

Wars and ethnic conflicts seem to be everywhere, putting missionaries under great stress. Considering whether to stay or leave the country becomes part of everyday life. Many choose to stay, even with all the cost involved, as in the case described at the beginning of this article. Najua Diba, for instance, a Brazilian missionary in Albania, felt so much a part of that country that departure or evacuation during the times of instability was virtually unthinkable. How could she leave behind all the brothers and sisters that she had won for Christ?

Workers in closed countries face oppression. The simple act of using the special clothes and manners that are required in those countries (especially for women) can produce much pressure and loneliness. Are missionaries able to embrace these challenges, adapt as needed, and continue whole-heartedly in their work?

Seeing limited results is something that can be very wearing, especially for those coming from countries where the church is flourishing. Is one willing to work in a country for several years without seeing tangible evidence of his/her labor?

And then there is disease. Malaria is one of the worst enemies missionaries face in certain African countries. Aldacyr Motta, a Brazilian missionary leader who lives in South Africa, concurs: the greatest nemesis is carried by the little mosquito. Many missionaries have been attacked by this disease, suffering through the pain. And some, just like missionaries from the past and like the people they are serving, have died.

So these are some of the realities—the adversities. Not all is negative, of course. There are many joys and rewards in serving the Lord! Yet candidates who are accustomed to the comforts of life, minimal suffering, and a mindset and lifestyle that elevate personal success, richness, and quick answers are particularly prone to struggles and failure. Good news is best presented—and often only presented—in the package of perseverance.

Equipping Missionaries for Adversity

Being involved myself in missions training for some years, I have come to the conclusion that training needs to be as thorough as possible. There are no shortcuts. Everything is part of the learning process: classroom lectures, homework, everyday chores, living together, evangelistic teams, and even parties. Group exercises, simulations which reflect field stress, and just our life together sheds so much light on our strengths and weaknesses, such as our creativity, independence, conflict styles, leadership skills, listening ability, and so on. It is so important to understand and improve our reactions under stress.

There are many important aspects of training to consider, including formal and non-formal approaches for language and culture learning, technical skills, etc. My emphasis here, though, is on the need to train our workers to persevere during trials and suffering, especially while on the field. This is a crucial area in which we as trainers and administrators also need to grow!

Practical Understanding of Suffering

As I have shared, missionary candidates need to understand biblical principles about suffering, perseverance, and trust in God. All these were part of Jesus' teaching and life. The preaching of the gospel frequently involves suffering, rejection, and persecution. Training should include general as well as specific challenges of the mission field, so that candidates can begin to adjust some of their expectations and coping strategies. Cultural and sociological studies will help them to understand their own weaknesses and their strengths to persevere. They also must understand their own culture and how it can impact their longevity either positively or negatively. They need to be exposed to the reality of suffering, by actually being at the place where it is happening (visiting hospitals, slums, etc.) and also by seeing it through videos or other forms of media. The ability to appraise a situation realistically is also an important cross-cultural and life skill. The important thing is that candidates need to think ahead about suffering and about how they will cope with it once they are exposed to it.

I remember visiting a Brazilian couple in Eastern Europe, prior to the collapse of Communism. They worked with an organization that supported the suffering church, bringing literature and encouragement. Part of their training included a simulated interrogation that was so real that some participants could not handle it. I believe that we need more of this kind of training. Theory can become practice, before one even sets foot in the new culture.

Seeing and living among people who are suffering great pain are bound to produce inner reactions and behavioral responses. Suffering can produce apathy, fear, irritability, and depression, along with physical and psychosomatic pains. With apathy comes an inner bleakness, a lack of interest in oneself and one's surroundings, and finally, a lack of energy to do one's job. Personal losses which are part of missions (e.g., many farewells, relocation) can have similar effects. The same can be said of team conflicts.

A missionary from Brazil, working in a village in Eastern Africa, lived through a brief civil war. She faced daily fear, insecurity, and lack of basic things such as food. In retrospect, she said, "I was there, I lived in situations of great pain, but it was worthwhile!" She was not focused on herself. Rather, what was really meaningful to her was being able to help others. She felt that all the suffering that she experienced was compensated by the support and love she received from others. She worked hard and took risks, but nothing could deter her from her commitment to seeing a school being built and people being saved. I believe that finding meaning in life, in part through caring for others, is one of our basic needs as humans. It is a core asset for cross-cultural coping too!

Models and Mentors

Missionary training must be done in a context where teachers and students can develop a relationship that goes beyond the classroom. This is more of an informal approach to learning. Teachers are friends, partners, and at times counselors. It is a discipleship process in which the teacher is a model. Values, interests, and attitudes become more transparent and can be held up to the light of biblical teaching. The candidates are trained to be agents of change, in the same way the teachers need to be agents of transformation in the lives of the candidates.

This approach brings a great deal of responsibility to the leaders. Teaching is more than transmitting knowledge. Teachers must also demonstrate in their own lives what they teach. Mission teachers need to have experienced the challenges of the mission field. They also need to have a good understanding of the areas in their own culture and life that had to change in order for them to be effective.

Spiritual Growth

I see spiritual growth as mostly involving informal training which aims to strengthen important habits, especially spiritual habits. The spiritual disciplines need to be cultivated, since they help a person to live a life devoted to God and to good deeds. Prayer, worship, simplicity, giving, solitude, Scripture, and fasting are important in our everyday life. It is through these practices, both on the field and off the field, that the abundant life that Jesus taught will be a reality.

The Valley of Blessing is a missionary training center in Brazil, located where Antioch Mission has its headquarters. This is a good example of a place where devotional life is strongly emphasized. In the heart of the property is a prayer center, where a prayer vigil is maintained. The students are included in this program, and each person regularly sets aside 90 minutes to pray there. Inside the chapel, there are seven small rooms for individual prayer. In each of these rooms, there are two books, one containing prayer requests for the Valley of Blessing itself and the other containing requests for the missionaries who are serving around the world. Missionaries who have been sent from this center testify that the lessons they learned from this prayer experience have been a blessing in their life on the field. Prayer makes a difference.

Conclusion

It is very important to consider how we are training our mission candidates. Missionary training must include the Christian teaching about suffering and perseverance. Candidates need to be exposed in advance to stressful situations along with healthy community life. Training needs to include all areas: cognitive, affective, spiritual, and behavioral. Teachers contribute best by mentoring through their lifestyles, as true disciples of Christ themselves. May we trust God to help us as trainers to prepare missionaries as best as possible to face the many challenges on the field. May they persevere with God's help and the help of friends, in their calls to the unreached.

You might be curious to know about what happened to the missionary mentioned at the beginning of the chapter. She went back to the same African country where she had been held hostage. She returned one year later, after having received physical, emotional, and spiritual support and refreshment. She serves with a local church and has developed an important work in the areas of health care and teaching. To answer my question at the beginning, I would say, "Yes, by the grace of God, she *was* prepared to persevere!"

Reflection and Discussion

1. List a few principles and key verses on the biblical teaching of suffering and perseverance. How do these relate to your experience?
2. Which aspects of your own culture/upbringing could contribute either positively or negatively to the adjustment of the missionary in situations marked with much suffering?
3. What are some practical ideas mission teachers could use in their training centers to increase the awareness of the candidates towards suffering?
4. What recommendations would you make to candidates—singles and couples with children—who will likely experience significant suffering during their ministry?
5. What resources are available to your mission to help those who return from fields where they faced suffering?

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Márcia Tostes *is a missionary with Antioch Mission, a Brazilian missionary organization, where she serves as the Director for Pastoral Care. She and her husband, Silas, were trained at All Nations Christian College in England. Her vision for pastoral care began in the UK while at this college, and since then she has been specializing in the subject. At the moment, she is studying family therapy. She is a member of the WEA Missions Commission and helps to coordinate the Brazilian Pastoral Care Working Group and the COMIBAM Pastoral Care Working Group. Márcia and Silas have two boys and are living in Brazil. Email: antioquiabrasil@uol.com.br.*

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18

Holding On to the Good: A Short Experience For Emotional Debriefing

ESLY CARVALHO

This chapter describes a group debriefing session that lasts about three hours and that is useful for missionaries returning from the field. It is aimed at processing gains and losses on the field, expectations for furlough, and the eventual return (or not) to the missionary field. It offers a quick and practical evaluation of the past, present, and future regarding missionary work. This approach is useful for Latin American missionaries and others as well.

The Bible says that we are to examine all things and hold on to that which is good (1 Thess. 5:21). Many times, missionaries are not given enough time to process their accomplishments and losses—temporary or otherwise—that occurred during a tenure on the field. Furlough always represents a mixed bag of emotions, as well as some kind of loss. For some, it is the opportunity to reconnect with loved ones, feeling the home familiarity that was lost with the mission abroad, and, for once, not feeling like so much of a foreigner or "sticking out." For others, it is the loss of familiarity, since the culture of the field has become part of their own personalities and often even more so for the children. Losing a routine, friends, familiarity, and culture, even temporarily, requires an acknowledgment.

In contrast, furlough is often a very unstable period of visits and fundraisers, traveling from town to town, home to home, oftentimes dragging unwilling teenagers along. Younger children miss the daily routine of home. At other times, furlough means spending a year in a new school environment with new challenges, both in academics as well as social skills. Latin American missionaries especially struggle with raising financial support for a return to the field or even making ends meet at home. This is due to the concept that missionaries should live as poor as church mice, as well as to poor follow-through on pledges made. And then there are the issues of changes in child education. Home schooling is not an option at this point, and children on furlough will usually go to school in a different language/culture than they had been studying in on the field.

Finally, there are expectations, often unspoken, about the future return to the field. Sometimes missionaries do

not return to the same place of service, which *really* entails an enormous loss to be processed. Other times, there will be new assignments within the mission itself, even if returning to the same locale. It is a good idea to bring up these expectations as soon as possible, in order to figure out which ones are realistic, scary, or comforting, so that missionaries can have a better sense of stability in a very uncertain environment.

Debriefing Workshop

The following short workshop provides an opportunity to begin to look at all of these issues. The exercises will be presented with accompanying comments. In ideal terms, many of the issues that come out of such a debriefing procedure will already have been discussed in some fashion within the family and the mission structure. It is hoped that the missionary organization has in place means of communicating missionary needs in acceptable and safe ways, while the workers are still on the field.

Many organizations do have certain structures that show pastoral care and concern for their missionaries, but oftentimes the focus is limited to operational debriefing. This type of debriefing has its merit, of course. (*How many people were led to the Lord? What were your specific activities on the field? etc.*) A common complaint of missionaries, though, is that they do not have a "place" where they can unwind about what is going on and not risk retaliation or rejection for their feelings. Being able to open up and share about one's feelings is an important aspect of missionary "health care." (*How did you feel about certain decisions? What would have been better for your family? How does this impact your relationship with the mission? etc.*) It is interesting to note that Jesus debriefed the apostles on their return from their "missionary incursions" (Luke 9:10; 10:17). Suffice it to say that this particular exercise has emotional debriefing as its primary goal in the context of bridging missionary needs and organizational needs.

It would be good to provide this framework for returning missionaries as soon as possible upon their return. It will ease furloughs, as well as give the missionaries and leadership at headquarters an opportunity to discuss relevant issues. Obviously, a three-hour workshop is not sufficient to cover the whole reentry process. One would hope that the missionary organization has already offered guidelines and materials prior to missionaries' return. As missionary agencies in Latin America mature, these issues are becoming more and more important in avoiding missionary burnout and subsequent resignation.

These debriefing workshops were developed in the framework of trust and confidentiality among returning missionaries, and they are basically for the benefit of the participants. Children and teenagers can benefit from such an exercise as well and need it just as much as the adults. Leadership at headquarters was not privy to the information that came out of these workshops, which was one of the reasons for success. Missionaries were free to "let down their hair" in a private and caring atmosphere, without fear of retaliation for not "performing" according to the expectations put on them. Obviously, they were free to use the information gleaned from the workshop about themselves as they pleased, but they were also kept to confidentiality regarding their peers who participated. Not all missions will be willing to allow for this level of transparency, but it is essential for the good outcome of this particular process. Participants felt encouraged when they realized that they were not the only ones struggling with certain issues or decisions. The exercise gave them a reality check, as well as perspective and insights into their experiences.

The leader of these workshops (a trained and experienced group psychotherapist) was not part of the mission and had no emotional stake regarding what went on or regarding future decisions relating to the missionaries. This was a com-

pletely neutral and outside person, with no prior knowledge of the participants, brought in specifically for this task, which also heightened the trusting atmosphere. No report was given to the mission headquarters about what went on, but many participants were encouraged to discuss certain hurts and painful decisions with the missionary organization. This workshop was offered in the framework of a week-long reentry and debriefing exercise provided by the missionary organization, through which their returnees were normally routed.

Instructions

What follows is a sample of the instructions given at the start of the session:

"This workshop will enable you to evaluate the years that each of you has just spent on the field and to sort out the things that you want to hold on to. We will also look at expectations for the furlough and focus a bit on future hopes.

"This will be done through a few action exercises, drawings, and sharing with each other about the wealth of experiences each has had. Hopefully, we will leave the workshop with a sense of closure and perhaps new insights regarding the experience.

"We expect that everyone present will maintain confidentiality about what may be shared here from a personal perspective regarding any of the others.

"Please feel free to share as much or as little as you desire. There is no obligation to disclose anything. However, you will get as much out of the workshop as you put into it. If you feel unable to adhere to these rules, we ask that you discreetly leave now." (No one has ever left.)

The Workshop

Step 1

The participants are asked to introduce themselves, where they are from, and where they served on the field during their last term. (The leader introduced herself first, emphasizing her own cross-cultural experiences, which helped put the members at ease.) Oftentimes, the participants already know each other, but this is not always the case and should not be taken for granted. Nametags are helpful (especially for the workshop leader!). Usually the leader knows very little about the participants. It is helpful to know which ones will not be returning to the field (for example, due to retirement), so that introductions can include those aspects.

Step 2

The participants are given white sheets of paper and boxes of crayons and asked to draw a picture of their experience on the field during this last term. Mention is made of what they left behind. Some people will always protest that they can't draw and will ask if they can write about their experience instead. It is explained to the group that most people cannot draw better than a five-year-old and that this is not an artistic competition. Writing is not an acceptable alternative, since the idea is to access the symbolic part of the brain that is fast, creative ("a picture is worth a thousand words"), and more connected to the emotions. It is also the part of the brain that helps change behavior.

Once the pictures have been drawn, the group is asked to share them in small groups of four or five people (couples should be separated). Pictures usually include significant friends and situations they have left behind, a special pet, and/or religious symbols (such as the Bible, God, etc.). After the small groups are finished sharing, they are asked to pray for one another.

Often this is a very emotional time as participants begin to share about what they have gone through in the last term and what they have left behind. Boxes of tissue should be available to the groups, since tears are commonplace. This is an important part of the process, and the emotions, often strong, are not to be stifled nor suppressed. It may be the only opportunity that participants will have to let out some of the strong feelings they

have had regarding this past experience. Prayer for each other usually brings adequate closure to the exercise. Participants are encouraged to acknowledge the enormity of some of their losses and to allow themselves to grieve.

Step 3

Once again in the large group, participants are asked to symbolically "pull out" of the picture what they would like to hold on to: things they have learned, people they have come to love, things they care about, etc. They are asked to place the item on the part of their body where they would like to keep it forever. For example, a woman may pull out the friendships she has made and place them over her heart. Or perhaps someone will pull out what he has learned and will put it on his head for future reference. One participant pulled out his family and put them in his hand. ("They are engraved in the palm of my hand.")

This is often a very touching and moving exercise, done in the big group, where others have an opportunity to see what each one would like to "hold on to" from their previous experience. Usually only positive experiences are pulled out and kept.

Step 4

Finally, a "start" and a "finish" line are drawn with masking tape on the floor, about five meters apart. Participants are asked to take off the shoe of the foot that will symbolically take the next step into their future, to show what they envision furlough, retirement, or leaving the field will be like in the ensuing months. All together, they line up at the starting line and move their own shoe the way they feel that the next few months will be like, until they reach the finish line.

It is very interesting to see how different people envision their futures in such different ways. Once, a participant took both shoes with him, saying, "I go into everything with both feet." Another time, one person went round and round and wondered if she would ever arrive at the finish line. Others made beelines to the finish: they knew where they were going. Still others took faltering steps, uncertain of what lay ahead. Some did the exercise in silence; others maintained a running commentary. In some groups, participants do the activity one at a time; most do it all together.

Step 5

This is the time for final sharing and closure. The participants are asked to share about what they learned during the exercises, as well as what this opportunity to debrief emotionally meant to them.

Conclusion

It is hoped that this simple exercise will encourage sending groups, from Latin America and elsewhere, to invest in the emotional debriefing of their field personnel. Note that children can also benefit from the exercise and have a lot of fun with it. It is common for missionaries to be debriefed regarding what they have done, including their accomplishments and difficulties, but few get the opportunity to share from the heart about their experiences. And "heart" experiences can be quite different from the "head" experiences. Sometimes they can even be at odds with each other. Even though believers "know" what has happened, it is important to let the feelings come out, whatever they may be. Unresolved feelings and unsatisfied or unrealistic expectations can lead to future problems for both mission and missionary, which is why this exercise can be so valuable. If necessary, participants are discreetly encouraged to seek out counseling, give themselves time in their grieving process, share certain aspects of the exercise with their supervisors, or follow other procedures which might be helpful to them.

Action exercises tend to draw out a lot of information very quickly. In Latin cultures, they have been especially helpful because of the "dramatic quality" of the

Latinos. Women tend to be more comfortable sharing their feelings, but it was amazing to see how many men also opened up, given the chance. The men especially like the shoe exercise. All of the participants commented positively on having been given an opportunity to *do* it instead of having to listen to long lectures on the reentry process itself. It was a good way of getting them "off and running" into furlough and reentry.

Reflection and Discussion

1. Why is emotional debriefing important? What type of experiences have you had with debriefing?
2. How should confidential information be handled in group debriefing sessions?
3. In what ways could children be involved in their own debriefing sessions?
4. What are the advantages and disadvantages of having an outside person do the debriefing?
5. How can sending organizations include debriefing in their member care toolbox?

Esly Regina Carvalho *is a Brazilian-American licensed psychotherapist, specializing in group therapy and psychodrama. She maintains a practice (Plaza del Encuentro) in Quito, Ecuador, where she lives with her husband, Ken Grant, an MK raised in China, and her daughter, Raquel. Esly is the author of many articles on counseling, recovery, and emotional healing and is fluent in three languages, Portuguese, English, and Spanish. She is presently leading Christian counseling training workshops through action methods. Email: plazadelencuentro@attglobal.net.*

19

Ministering Wisely in the Middle East: Christian Service Under Pressure

Naji Abi-Hashem
Anneke Companjen

Understanding the social and historical context of the Middle East, along with the cultural and religious values of the people, is key to working effectively in this region. Pastors, missionaries, and national Christians must live wisely and righteously as they seek to shine the light of Christ, often in the midst of intense pressures. They face serious struggles, and at times they may go through suffering and persecution, as the cases at the end recount. Naji writes the first part of this chapter and Anneke the second part.

The Middle East is a vast and diverse area of the world. Its people are friendly and hospitable, and in most places life is beautiful, easy, meaningful, and tranquil. In other troubled areas, though, life is marked by tension, stress, conflicts, and hostility. The region has a wide variety of subcultures, norms, traditions, and customs. It is a place where ancient civilizations meet modern lifestyles. The Middle East serves as the gateway to three major continents. Its people are still rooted in the land, as they deeply cherish their traditions, values, faiths, and cultures. Most urban people operate well within the modern, Western lifestyle, without losing their cultural heritage or religious identity. Christian workers in the Middle East encounter many rewards and joys. At the same time, they face serious challenges and struggles. Depending on the situation and location, Christian service is limited and shaped by the surrounding circumstances, traditions, subcultures, social norms, and political climate.

Presently, the Christian presence in many quarters of the Middle East is being diminished and weakened. Unfortunately, as we enter the third millennium, the Christian communities are decreasing in number, in presence, and in influence. In some areas, serious persecution is taking place. These are alarming signs. Many church leaders, both in the East and in the West, are deeply concerned about these new developments. Many provinces, communities, and towns that were predominantly Christian in the recent past are now gradually losing ground and becoming equally mixed or predominantly non-Christian (mostly Muslim). There are numerous reasons for this current phenomenon, including political tension, economic hardship, civil unrest, and religious oppression.

All of these factors are causing migration in large numbers, especially for those who can afford to leave. Migration is high among the young and educated, particularly those from unfortunate and less established communities.

Christian families are traditionally smaller, and many young adults opt to remain single, which is a little more acceptable within the Christian communities and in urban settings than in other places. In addition, there are scores of young priests and nuns who dedicate themselves to celibacy and ecclesiastical life (which means fewer offspring).

So, the Christian community and the Christian presence in the Middle East are shrinking! My (Naji's) homeland, Lebanon, for example, used to be predominantly a Christian nation, with about 85% Christians and the rest a mix of Druze and Muslims. Now the Christian community counts for about 35% and is declining.

Lebanon is as old as the biblical times. It was once prosperous and successful and a model of co-existence. It was a place where culture, education, ethnicity, religion, civilization, and political persuasion met and formed a successful democratic republic, manifesting a balanced harmony and healthy integration. The country was hospitable and free, modern in function, and open to the East, the West, and the international community. Currently, it has a rich variety of subcultures, socioeconomic classes, and traditions. Its population is about 3.5 million, with another 13 million Lebanese of all generations living outside the country.

Since Lebanon reflects the miniature Middle East and the gate to the Arabic and European worlds, most religious sects and subcultures are represented in it in some measure. The Maronite, Catholic, Greek Orthodox, and Eastern churches are all strong. Protestants are a minority. The Jews were established in many cities. But since the political turmoil started, the majority of Jews reluctantly migrated from Lebanon and neighboring countries, leaving behind their homes, Arabic heritage, and synagogues. The Shiites are the larger Muslim group. They are, however, socially and economically less established than the Sunnis. The Arabic and old Middle Eastern way of life are still observed in villages and rural areas in the mountains, valleys, and deserts—less in Lebanon now and more in the surrounding countries.

All these dynamics, together with the rapid changes in the Middle East, are affecting the local churches and missionary work. Churches of all types are struggling to adjust and, at times, readjust over and over again to the new developments and emerging needs. They have to adapt quickly to new regimes, political systems, social trends, and religious realities. They have to change approaches, switch places, apply new labels, and carefully guard their ministries or else completely stop their activities. At times, they must sit and wait patiently until the dust settles down again after each turbulence. In vulnerable and changing areas of the Middle East, nothing is taken for granted.

Historically, the Middle East has been the birthplace of most civilizations and religions. There are several groups in the Arab world that are religiously radical (zealous to the cause of Islam as the only true religion) and politically angry (because of the invasion of Western imperialism and culture and also because of the presence of Israel and its behaviors in the region). Some individuals would fight anybody anywhere, using any means to press their ultimate cause. Some are paid or indoctrinated to do so, as is the case in any troubled spot in the world. However, the vast majority of the Arabic people are friendly, moderate, peaceful, God-fearing, and hospitable.

Although Christians are declining in influence both politically and financially in most areas of the Middle East and North Africa, they are gaining spiritually. There seems to be a kind of renewal and return to the fountains of faith and to Christian churches. There is a fresh sense of collaboration and camaraderie among Christian groups, which has often been the case

throughout history when believers have faced pressure, opposition, or persecution. The churches have to unite and mobilize their efforts and energy, in order to face the challenges and reach out to those in need. Unfavorable conditions are gradually drawing Christians together and sharpening their faith, witness, and service. This is the current situation in the Middle East, and this is where hundreds of pastors and missionaries are faithfully trying to serve, respond to ever-changing conditions, provide care, maintain a presence, and, at times, merely survive in an unpredictable climate and under unfriendly circumstances.

Common Misperceptions

There are a number of misunderstandings and misconceptions regarding the Arabic world and the Middle East in general, especially in the Western mind and media. Such ideas often take the form of inaccurate impressions or sociocultural stereotypes which can be very misleading and, at times, dangerous (Abi-Hashem, 1992). They need to be corrected, especially in the minds of Western Christians who are interested in supporting churches and ministries in the Middle East.

All Arabs Are Muslims

Although the majority of Arabs are Muslims, there are significant Christian communities in the region, in some countries more than others. Middle East historians have documented the presence of Christianity in the Arabic peninsula centuries before Islam. Early church missionaries spread east from Jerusalem to the deserts, reaching multitudes of local tribes and Bedouin Arabs, and then continued to the Far East until they reached the tip of India. Many of the Christians in Arabia converted to Islam, either under direct threat of repeated holy Muslim raids or through indirect pressure which made conversion a matter of necessity for survival. Since then, Islam has kept expanding to become one of the major religious and political systems in the world. It is, today, one of the fastest growing religions in the world. Islamic strategists are mobilizing intense missions and evangelistic efforts to reach both the contemporary/affluent world and the developing/underprivileged countries with the message of the Quran.

Some Muslims, just like Christians, are such by affiliation and heritage only. They are not necessarily "practicing" or committed Muslims. However, religious affiliation is still an integral part of people's sense of community and part of their social identity. In the Middle East, there is usually no sharp division between religion and government. Both are intertwined, along with the cultural heritage and social customs. Therefore, people and leaders are not afraid of referring to God or making room for their faiths or respecting each other's practices and customs in private, in public, in business, or in politics.

Presently, the largest Christian presence in the Arabic world is found in Egypt, although it is still considered a minority when compared to the total population of that country. It is mainly represented by the historic, yet active Coptic church, a North African form of the Eastern Orthodox. Other mainline Christian denominations, parachurch organizations, and other bodies and institutions are present as well. But lately, most of them have been under serious pressure and even persecution. The rise of Islamic fundamentalism and the residual effects of the Gulf War in 1991 strongly fed into the anti-West, anti-Christianity movement in the Arabic world.

In most Muslim countries, Christian gatherings and activities are restricted. In Jordan, Syria, Iraq, and Egypt, where the system is moderate, churches have limited freedom as the state keeps an eye on them. Depending on the religious system of the particular country, the day of worship for the churches is normally Friday, because Sunday is a regular business day. Preachers and church leaders have to monitor carefully what they say, because a secret

intelligence agent may be present at any church service or activity.

In Saudi Arabia, Libya, Qatar, Yemen, Bahrain, Morocco, and Kuwait, where the state law is mostly Islamic, few or no church buildings are allowed. In some cases, meeting houses or worship halls are permitted to foreigners only. Approaching a local resident in any form of direct evangelization or persuasion is against the law and is severely punished. Punishment may take the form of withdrawing hard-to-obtain permission to meet as a religious group or even deportation of the people involved. In highly restricted countries, national believers meet secretly for Bible study and prayer, while closely monitoring doors, windows, and telephone lines.

The most free and democratic country in the whole region has been Lebanon. Up until the last decade, Lebanon used to be known as the Christian nation in the Middle East, because the vast majority of its population were Christians. It has been the home of many Christian organizations, seminaries, agencies, and publication houses which have been serving the needs of the church communities in the area. The presidency and most of the key posts in the government, army, and judicial system were held by figures from the Christian community. Other countries in the region are largely monarchies, semi-democratic systems, or still ruled by a one-party regime.

Lebanon had a very distinct cultural characteristic that separated it from other countries in the Middle East. Beirut is a strategic gate and cosmopolitan city that is open to both the East and the West. Although it is part of the Arabic world by affiliation, culture, and language, yet it is European and Western in many ways, especially in its urban lifestyle, education, exposure, finance, and international affairs. All the other Christian communities in the whole Arabic world used to look to Lebanon for leadership, encouragement, networking, and moral support that enhanced their minority status in their own community.

While not all Arabs are Muslims, note too that not all Muslims are Arabs. Indonesia (the largest Muslim country), Iran, Pakistan, Turkey, and several African nations are legally and religiously Muslim, but culturally and ethnically they are not Arabic. In addition, large populations in the Far East, the former Soviet Union, and recently in the West are also Muslims.

Not all Middle Easterners are Arabs either. Although Iran is a Middle Eastern country, it is not Arabic but rather Persian. Cyprus is a Middle Eastern island, but half of its population is Greek, and the other half is Turkish. Cyprus is ruled by Turkey, another non-Arab nation. Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, and Morocco are North African yet are largely Arabic nations and members of the Arabic League of Nations.

All Arabs Are Primitive People

"The first images that come to the Westerner's mind when he thinks of the Arabs are sand, desert, camels, oil wells, irrational mobs … and the like" (Hamady, 1960, p. 229). This is a socioeconomic stereotype. "The Western world must realize that ignorance about Arabian culture and history is not 'bliss,' but a detriment to international relations" (Hamada, 1990, p. 128). That is also true of Western Christians and missionaries who are interested in investing efforts in this region. Unfortunately, many well-meaning organizations and individuals jump into the field without adequate preparation or careful consultation. The results are usually unfavorable and negative on all levels.

As is the case with other large regions, the Arabic people and nations have a wide variety of societies, subcultures, economic levels, and traditions. On one end of the spectrum, there are the oldest and most traditional lifestyles, found in villages, small towns, and among the nomads. On the other end, there are the contemporary and most complex lifestyles. Since the region is deeply rooted in land and history, many traditions and characteristics of the people are transferred through the

generations and are woven into the fabric of social structure and communal living like threads of gold.

Not all Middle Eastern countries have oil, deserts, or wealth. Some are rich and well-established, while others are struggling and still developing. Lebanon, for example, was a leader in the whole region in terms of finances, education, tourism, and income per capita, although it has no oil, deserts, or camels. For decades it was called the Switzerland of the Middle East. Not anymore! Small nations often pay the price of regional conflicts and become victims of world politics. This has been the experience of Lebanon, where interference of other nations has significantly deteriorated and disintegrated the country. The Lebanese people deeply grieve the loss of their identity, their accomplishments, their uniqueness, and most probably their country. With the winds of change and unpredictable politics in the region, Lebanon may become another Cyprus or perhaps a second Palestine. It may lose its role as a leading "Christian" nation, its social and religious freedom, its historic capacity to train church leaders for the whole Middle East, and its ability to host most of the European and North American mission and parachurch organizations that serve the Near East and North Africa.

All Arabs Are Fanatics and Terrorists

In the minds of some Westerners, the term Arabic is equivalent to fanatic, radical Muslim, uncivilized, or even terrorist. This misconception could be the result, in part, of a biased media, uninformed reports, or misleading news agencies. Some Arabs, living or traveling in the West, refer to themselves as Middle Easterners rather than Arabs, because of the recent stereotypes associated with the term.

The reality is that there are different types of Muslim societies. There are the *traditional* (good and simple-hearted people, mostly rural, who enjoy a peaceful community life and a rich cultural heritage), the *secular* (mostly educated and business people, who live in fairly open and progressively complex societies), the *fundamental* (highly dedicated, zealous, and radically committed to the sociopolitical and religious causes of Islam to an extreme stand), the *moderate* (balanced in views and practices, as individuals, groups, or countries), and, finally, the *national* (who strive to establish a regime uniting the government, religion, and social life by applying the Islamic civil laws and regulations to all aspects of personal, communal, and societal affairs) (for further analysis, see Voll, 1982).

In the understanding of some "cultural" Muslims, such as Abd Al-Masih (1996), Islam is not just another religion or religious option, as many Westerners define it. "Islam is a theocentric religion" (p. 50). Real Muslims, as some of the minority "fundamentalists" explain, must aim toward a Theocratic State. Such religious states reflect the spiritual, cultural, and civil systems integrated together. According to Abd Al-Masih, there is a striking difference between Islam and Christianity regarding the view of religious wars and the use of force: Allah in the Quran commands the faithful Muslims to strive, and he promises that those who die in the holy jihad "hope to ascend directly into paradise" (p. 60). Mohammed is believed to have taken part in some raids, and his model "remains the unique ideal for all Islamic wars in the name of Allah" (p. 60).

The rise of "extremists" or "fanatics"—by far the minority—as an extreme form of resistance or, as they consider themselves, freedom fighters and carriers of supreme ideological causes in Allah's service, has reshaped the whole atmosphere in the Middle East and North Africa. Obviously, there are major reasons that so many groups are angry with the West in general and are hostile toward the United States in particular. Increasingly, they resent the West for its cultural invasion, economic exploitation, political oppression, military superiority, and imperialistic greed. They are specifically angry at the U.S. govern-

ment for its unconditional and excessive support of the state of Israel. For devout Muslims, Jerusalem is an extremely important place. It is their third holiest city, after Mecca (Makkah) and Al-Madina, both in Saudi Arabia. In addition, those who "have little or nothing" can resent the level of materialism, hedonism, and affluent consumption of those who "have a lot and plenty." Also, some equate Christianity with the West and remember with bad taste the history of European Crusaders who invaded the Arabic region and the Muslim world. Furthermore, they react negatively to the corrupt lifestyles, products, items, and movies that the West constantly exports to the Middle East.

Understanding the major types of Muslim communities and the basic belief system of Islam has tremendous implications for any Christian work or workers in the Middle East. Depending on the kind of society and level of religious dedication where Christian pastors and missionaries decide to locate and serve, they must be careful in their approaches, language, and activities. The ultimate goal is to be accepted and effective in making needed contributions and, at the same time, avoiding any provocative mistakes or unnecessary offenses to the hosting community and the larger Middle Eastern society.

Historical and Religious Background

The terms Arabia and Arabah refer to the plains and wilderness. "The Arabs and Hebrews originally did not comprise either a nation or nationality. They were nomadic tribes wandering in the wilderness" (Hamada, 1990, p. 41). Most Westerners would be surprised to know that Arabs and Jews come from the same origin, "and both of them are called Semites" (p. 40). Also, the term Arab means "desert" and is probably derived from the Hebrew word Eber. "Eber literally refers to the people living 'over the other side,' or 'beyond the river [Euphrates].' Abir is the Arabic word for Eber, meaning 'to cross over'" (p. 40). In the Quran, the word Arab is also used to describe Bedouins and nomads. One of the biblical references to Arabs occurs in Jeremiah 25:24, "all the kings of Arabia and all the kings of the mixed tribes that dwell in the desert."

Although the word Islam in Arabic has the connotation of peace, fundamentally it means a total submission to the will of Allah. Islam calls for a complete surrender to God, the only One, Transcendent, and the Most High. Allah is remote and invisible, and true and faithful Muslims can only follow his laws and teachings as brought by Mohammed, who is God's closing Messenger and the Seal of God's Prophets. Mohammed appeared to be a deep thinker and a great reformer. He diligently learned about spiritual life and piety and boldly confronted paganism and social disorder of his day. His reputation quickly spread, and his message was broadly embraced. The phase of pre-Islamic Arabia, *al-jahileyya*, was referred to as a time of ignorance before Mohammed introduced "the true way." Although there were monotheist tribes around the area, which Mohammed respected and which attracted him by their faith in one God, he desired to unify Arabia and Islam.

Thus, the rise and expansion of Islam as a strong religious, cultural, and political movement resulted in the birth of a major world civilization that enjoyed significant prosperity and advances in architecture, science, and literature, while most of Europe was still struggling in dark history. That was definitely the golden age of Islam. Many Muslim groups and nations are presently trying to restore that glory. They are still hoping to recover the full power of Islam and are dreaming about its full unity and expansion. Many Muslim nations have great financial resources, mainly from the rich wells of oil, known to them as black gold. As such, they feel especially blessed by Allah and deeply obligated to preserve and spread his only true way (Youssef, 1991).

Essentially, Islam is a way of life guided by a set of beliefs, specific doctrines, spiri-

tual rules, civil laws, and social norms. The vast interpretations of the Islamic teachings fill volumes of detailed commentaries pertaining to almost every aspect of communal life, personal behavior, and family conduct. It is important to keep in mind that Islam is like any other large, historic religion in that it contains several branches and schools of thought, as well as various traditions and cultural distinctives. Devout Muslims of all traditions strongly feel responsible to Allah to obey his laws and carry on his causes. Islam stresses the oneness of God and his unity and sovereignty. There is a great deal of overlap of stories, and there are many parallel themes between Christianity and Islam, between the Bible and the Quran.

Six Tenets of Islamic Faith

1. *Al-Shahaada*—the profession of faith. "I proclaim that there is no God but Allah (the One God), and Mohammed is the messenger (Rassooll) of Allah." This tenet is the key to becoming and remaining a true Muslim.

2. *Al-Salaatt*—prescribed prayers, five times daily, public or private, facing Makkah (Mecca), their holiest city. A prayer call is usually broadcasted from the minaret of mosques around the Muslim world. Prayers are not conversations with God, but rather tasks and repetitions of set lines, in order to obey God's demands and please him. At death, only Allah has the last word about who goes to Paradise and who goes to Fire. Moslems hope their conduct, deeds, and spiritual sincerity will weigh heavier than their sins, so that God will rule in their favor. They are free to utter personal prayers after they recite the expected ones.

3. *Al-Zakaat*—giving alms, a requirement of practicing the faith. Giving in any form and to any good cause would qualify as well (such as Islamic missions). Beggars take advantage of such practices, especially around Muslim holidays.

4. *Al-Sa'uom*—fasting, mostly limited to the holy month of Ramadan, when the Quran is believed to have been given or directly revealed to Mohammed. The Muslim year is based on 12 lunar months.

5. *Al-Hajj*—pilgrimage to Makkah. It must be made during a certain window of time of the Muslim lunar calendar and must be made at least once in a lifetime. Millions of Muslims from around the world gather in Saudi Arabia in what is known to be the largest single religious pilgrimage in history.

6. *Al-Jihad*—striving for a holy cause or serving Allah with fervent zeal and supreme effort. This term may have both a soft and a strong connotation. It can be applied on the personal level (e.g., an individual quest toward purity and piety), as well as on the communal or national level (e.g., seeking greater dedication to Islam as a country). If necessary, it can take an intense or extreme meaning like "fighting a holy war," which is believed to be the duty of every dedicated Muslim—man or woman, boy or girl—in the face of corruption, threat, or injustice. Jihad is called for in order to defend, empower, or reform the faith. Although most Muslims are friendly and compassionate people, yet inside the core of Muslim doctrine there is room for extreme views, extreme interpretations, and radical positions, which easily can lead to militant sentiments and the use of aggression or force.

It is no secret that not only organizations and groups support the multiple efforts to spread out the Islamic faith and its practice, but certain official governments send major funding to advance the cause of Islam worldwide. They are supporting a variety of intense efforts to teach the Quran and win converts in Africa, to empower Muslim communities and struggling nations in the former Soviet Union, and to build large mosques and Islamic centers throughout Europe and North America. Islamic strategists are using methods, devices, and approaches similar to those used by Christians in evangelism and missionary work. According to Wertsman (2001, p. 42), "Despite the disproportionate number of Christian Arabs, the influx of Muslim Arabs has contributed to Islam

becoming one of the fastest-growing religions in the United States. It is believed that in the next few decades, Muslims will outnumber Jews in the United States."

As the Muslim message is going further West, the Christian message is going further East. However, many Muslim nations closely protect their people and their borders from any Christian influence. They are concerned about any Christian or non-Muslim penetration. They do not allow any freedom of religion besides Islam, which is to them the only religion. Such countries are known to be restrictive and operate under severe laws (reinforcing Islamic law). They tend to oppose and, at times, persecute any non-Muslim beliefs and activity. Christian workers who live in such environments must carefully watch their movements, relationships, and activities. In contrast, Western countries in general offer Muslim (and other) immigrants and strategists freedom to move, worship, teach, recruit others, and practice their faith and customs.

Challenges Facing Christian Ministry

The more active an Evangelical or Protestant ministry is, the more resistance it may face. This resistance may come not only from non-Christian religious leaders, from the state, or from the radical social and political groups, but also from some leaders of the traditional and ancient churches, who question the authenticity of such recent church and parachurch movements. The latter group can perceive Evangelicals and Protestants as not belonging to the Middle East's long history and heritage. Rather, their ministries are seen as imported forms of Christianity from the West, which lack continuity, substance, and cohesion among Middle Easterners. Other groups which are politically leftist and radical in their ideologies think that Evangelicals and Protestants have hidden political agendas and are pro-West and therefore pro-Zionist in their orientation. This belief greatly complicates ministry. Local pastors and missionaries must try to explain and demonstrate that they are truly biblical, that they are non-political, that they have nothing to do with the modern state of Israel as a Jewish nation, and that they have a lot in common with the traditional churches and historic Christian faiths in the region.

The more open and friendly pastors and missionaries are to the local spiritual and community leaders (it's better to befriend the non-Christian religious leaders as well), the more acceptable they and their ministry will be. Unfortunately, some Evangelical pastors and missionaries bring with them an individualistic and more isolated approach, which causes more harm than good. Instead of building toward cooperative efforts and working alongside the nationals and other locals, the isolated strategies normally create negative impressions, bad publicity, and increased suspicion. Most importantly, those who follow such strategies alienate themselves and those around them in the community.

I often tell my colleagues in the Middle East that we cannot afford to criticize, oppose, or fight each other because of doctrinal or practical differences. We need to unify our efforts and support each other, allowing room for unique styles and approaches within the larger Christian community. Thankfully, we see this happening more and more through the formation of "strategic partnerships" of Christians within the region, both nationals and expatriates. These groups bring together different organizations and denominations in order to pray and develop cooperative strategies for ministry together. They are a breath of fresh air and an essential encouragement in the midst of pressure and turmoil.

Pastors and missionaries often face significant emotional struggles and psychological distress in their personal, marital, and family life. In addition, they often serve a troubled population and families all around the area who need careful help and, at times, professional attention. To be effective, Christian workers need sound

training and continuing education, as well as skills in problem solving, crisis intervention, and basic counseling. They also have needs for belonging and for true camaraderie, needs for personal and intellectual growth, and a need for someone to check on them, stand by them, and encourage them. They long to be nurtured, mentored, and well supported.

During the last five years, I have been spending several months in the Middle East every year, making myself available to the churches and the community at large. I have tried to help in any way possible—teaching, counseling, preaching, training, and encouraging. I have greatly enjoyed meeting with Christian workers and listening to their remarkable journeys.

Besides the chronic uncertainties and major stresses of everyday life, many Christian workers from the Middle East—just like their compatriots in other parts of the world—carry with them heavy burdens, along with profound sadness and grief. Many have been through numerous crises, have experienced major losses, and have been exposed to traumatic events. And the agonies continue. In addition, there can be severe economic hardships, which put an additional burden on pastors and nationals. Just living on the bare minimum is a challenge. Many people have to work at two jobs in order to survive. Some have been refugees and immigrants, even within their own countries. Their lives have been uprooted, family relations have been forcefully disrupted, and their loved ones have been scattered. Their hopes for even a minimum level of stability have been broken and lost. Yet, they try to keep the faith diligently and serve the Lord earnestly. They are truly heroes of the faith.

Reflections on Religious Persecution

In the second half of this article, I (Anneke) would like to share a brief chapter from my book on women in the persecuted church, *Hidden Sorrow, Lasting Joy* (Companjen, 2000). The specific focus is on some cases of persecution against Christians in Iran. These cases are a vivid example of the high price that believers and church leaders often pay. Takoosh, the main subject, gave her consent to use her name and to share her story.

Please understand that I am in no way trying to single out Iran, since persecution and discrimination are taking place in many shapes and forms in several countries—and not just in the Middle East alone—and they are affecting a number of other faiths and world religions. Nonetheless, Christians are by far the largest group who suffer as a result of their faith. In fact, over 200 million Christians lack their full human rights as described in Article 18 of the United Nations' 1948 *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, primarily because of their religious convictions (Candelin, 2001).

Article 18 states: "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion of belief in teaching, practice, worship, and observance." In 1981, the United Nations General Assembly reaffirmed the principles enunciated in this Declaration and other earlier documents via its *Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief*.

Takoosh Hovsepian: In God's University

Takoosh was a lively Iranian teenager from an Armenian background with flashing dark eyes and a beautiful smile. She sometimes attended church with her grandmother, and there she heard that she could have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. For some reason, she just couldn't get the idea out of her mind, and after several conversations she prayed with some of her friends and invited the Lord into her life.

Soon after she came to Jesus, Takoosh brought a very important request to God in prayer. "Lord, please give me a husband who loves you. I want so much to serve you, and I pray for a partner who is a Christian so that we can serve you together."

Of course she had no way of knowing that a young man named Haik Hovsepian was bringing a very similar request before God. Haik was a believer, too. He had just finished his studies and felt he was being called by God into Christian ministry.

"Lord," he prayed, "I want you to use me in your service. But I need someone to stand with me, someone to share my ministry with me. Please help me find a godly girl who wants to please you above all else. Lead me to her, Lord, and I'll ask her to be my wife."

Haik often served as a guest speaker in various churches. One Sunday morning he visited the city of Isfahan. While he was preaching there, his eyes fell on a fifteen-year-old girl sitting in the audience. There were quite a few other young women sitting in the congregation, but for some reason his eyes were drawn to that one special face. He had fasted and prayed that he would find a godly wife before making the journey. Was it his imagination, or was the Lord saying, *This is the woman you have prayed for. I have chosen her for you!*

Could it be so? Or was he simply responding to a pair of dark eyes, a quiet spirit, a lovely smile? He couldn't be sure. She seemed a little too tall and slim, but something in his spirit kept saying, *This is the one*. Well aware that he was about to make one of the most important decisions of his life, Haik fasted and prayed for three days. And by the end of his fasting, he still felt that the Lord was speaking to him in the same way.

Fighting off his doubts and fears, the young man summoned all his courage and went to talk to Takoosh. He told her about his prayer for a godly wife. "This is a little hard to explain," he began rather sheepishly, "but I think God has shown me that you're the woman he has chosen for me."

Takoosh was stunned. She wasn't sure what to say, but deep in her heart she had much the same feeling. In an unsteady voice, she answered, "Like you, I've been praying for a mate who wants to serve the Lord with me. Maybe you're the answer to my prayer, too."

Later that evening, when she tried to talk things over with her parents, they weren't at all pleased. "You don't even know this man!" they protested. "And you need to finish your education. What if you're left alone some day and you have to work? You'll have nothing to fall back on!"

But the more she talked to Haik and the more she talked to God, the more Takoosh was convinced that this man really was the one for her. After much conversation with her parents and after many private prayers, Takoosh's family eventually relented. They were, in fact, impressed with the young man, too.

"He is an exceptional boy," her father said. "I can see that for myself."

Great Joy, Deep Sorrow

So at quite a young age, Takoosh became Mrs. Hovsepian. She soon found out that being married to a pastor in Iran was not exactly an easy life. But Haik's love and his gentle, romantic ways helped her through the early adjustments. He clearly loved her, and they both deeply loved the Lord.

Those were days of increasing political upheaval in Iran, which eventually culminated in the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Before long, Takoosh's parents fled the country and moved to the United States.

"Are you wishing you could move to the States, too?" Haik asked her the day she told her parents good-bye.

"No," Takoosh told him. "There's no way I'm leaving you. I am staying here. But just remember—I'm doing it for you!"

"I'd rather you stayed for God," Haik countered.

But from that time on, perhaps because he was the only family she now had in the country, Haik began to treat his wife like a

queen. He realized it was painful for Takoosh to live such a huge distance away from her loved ones. So he did everything he could to encourage her and keep her spirits up.

The two of them were genuinely well matched and content with one another, and their happiness was inexpressible when their first child, a little boy, was born. Like most new fathers, Haik was enormously proud of the baby. And the more Haik fell in love with their son, the more Takoosh fell in love with Haik. Those were the most joyful days of her life—caring for her infant son and watching his father's delight in him.

"God, you are so good to us," Takoosh sometimes prayed, feeling deep gratitude for her new family. "You've given me a wonderful husband who loves you and a beautiful baby. I'm so thankful that we're serving you together."

By then, Haik was pastoring a Christian fellowship, which was growing larger ever week. Not only was he an excellent Bible teacher, but Haik was also a gifted musician who loved to lead the congregation in praise. He had an exceptionally good voice, and the worship in their church never failed to move her to tears. "Thank you, Lord, for all you've done for us," Takoosh often prayed, feeling blessed in ways she never could have imagined.

Unfortunately, the greatest joys in life sometimes have to make room for the deepest sorrows. And so it would be for Takoosh, who would soon have to face more than her share of suffering. One night as they drove to a Christian meeting, Haik's car was struck head-on by another vehicle. The other driver was clearly at fault, but it was little comfort to anyone. Haik and Takoosh were severely injured. Their beautiful son was killed instantly.

Takoosh's physical pain was severe, but her emotional agony was indescribable.

"How could you allow this to happen to us, Lord?" Takoosh often cried out as her body slowly and painfully mended. "All we ever wanted to do was to serve you. Why didn't you protect us? Why did our baby have to die?"

There were no easy answers for Takoosh's desperate questions, and for many months it seemed that her broken spirit would never heal. It took her a very long time to stop being angry at God. Thankfully, the other Christians in their church understood her battle, and they interceded for her continually. They prayed that Takoosh would be able to forgive the other driver. They prayed that the Lord would heal her aching heart. And they helped in every practical way imaginable.

Eventually, Takoosh relinquished her bitterness into God's hands, and once she did so, the wound in her heart gradually diminished. As time went by, she learned how to keep her sorrow in its place, especially after the Lord gave her and Haik another son.

Meanwhile, Haik was a tower of strength during this terrible time. His strong faith in God made it possible for him not to waver in days of adversity. Rather than dwelling on his own loss, he went out of his way to help Takoosh. She was amazed to see that her husband would do anything to make her life easier. Her love for him knew no bounds. He was the light of her life.

"Brother Haik Is Missing"

Over the years, as their family increased, so did their persecutions. After the death of their first son, Haik and Takoosh were blessed with four more children—three sons and a daughter. And when Mehdi Dibaj, another Iranian pastor, was taken to prison and his wife was unable to care for their children, the family increased yet again. Haik became like a father to the Dibaj children as well.

By now Haik's role in the Iranian Christian community had become both more important and more visible. He was now chairman of the Council of Protestant Pastors. It was up to him in this position to issue a report about the violations of Christians' rights in Iran, a report that was published all over the world. He also refused

to endorse a document produced by Iran's religious and political authorities stating that the Christian church in Iran enjoyed freedom of religion. This made him no friends in the hardcore fundamentalist regime that now ruled the country.

To make matters worse, when Haik was pressured to stop reaching out to Muslims with the gospel message, he flatly refused. He made it clear that his Tehran church would continue to welcome anyone and everyone who wanted to know more about Jesus the Messiah.

Brother Haik preached the gospel everywhere he went, to whoever would listen, no matter what their beliefs. No government could restrain him. His church was alive and active, and Haik was loved by everyone who knew him—everyone except the Iranian authorities. Living an outspoken Christian life in a militantly Muslim world was a challenge few believers would dare to face, but Haik faced it daily, along with other Christian leaders who shared his courage and faith. Haik set an example for the entire world to see by refusing to give in to intimidation and fear.

One day in January 1994, Haik kissed Takoosh good-bye and headed for the airport, where he was scheduled to meet with a friend. At first, when he didn't return, she thought the authorities might have detained him. But when she called around, every official said the same thing: "We don't know anything about him." Takoosh's best hope was that her husband was in jail.

A couple of days later, Johan, the children, and I were starting to eat dinner when the telephone interrupted our mealtime conversation. Johan took the call, and as he listened to the voice on the other end of the phone, the expression on his face told us all that something was terribly wrong.

The call was from California, from an Iranian Christian friend there. "Johan, Brother Haik has been missing for two days. Nobody knows where he is or what's happened to him. He went to the airport to meet somebody and never returned home. Please pray, and try to mobilize others to pray as well. Frankly, it doesn't look good…."

The sad news came as a shock, but it was not totally unexpected. We knew Pastor Haik had been extremely outspoken about the persecution of Iranian Christians. During the previous months, there had been a worldwide campaign to protest and pray against the imminent execution of Mehdi Dibaj, whose children Haik and Takoosh had been caring for the nine years he had been in jail. Dibaj had been unexpectedly released only a few days before.

Through Open Doors, we contacted friends and colleagues who organized a massive prayer effort. Within hours, thousands of people in dozens of countries were praying for Haik around the clock.

Finally, after more than a week of anxiously waiting for news about his whereabouts, on Sunday morning, January 30, the phone rang at the Hovsepian house. Takoosh handed the receiver to their oldest son, Joseph. "It's the police," she said quietly. "They want to talk to you."

When Joseph arrived at the police station, an officer unceremoniously thrust a grisly photograph into his hands. "Is this your father?" the policeman asked coldly. "We found this body in a small alleyway in Tehran. He was brutally murdered. Looks like he died about 10 days ago."

Joseph identified the body in the photograph as his father's.

Waves of shock rippled across the world. In fact, many Christians—even those who didn't know Haik personally—felt that they had lost a close friend. But Takoosh and her four children, ages ten to twenty-three, had lost the dearest person in all the world to them.

Takoosh wept for days. The skin beneath her eyes became inflamed and infected. She simply could not stop crying. Days later, our own eyes filled with tears as we watched a video of the memorial service in the Assembly of God church in Tehran. I could not take my eyes off Haik's

widow. She was seated in the front row, surrounded by her children, all dressed in black. Her face was a study in tragedy. I wondered if she would ever smile again.

The church was filled to overflowing. A large picture of Haik was placed on the platform surrounded by dozens of floral wreaths and bouquets. We listened in silence to a recording of one of Haik's sermons on persecution and suffering. Later on, his beautiful voice filled the auditorium as one of his recorded songs was played.

The camera zoomed in on Mehdi Dibaj. "Not Haik, but I should have died!" he exclaimed when he spoke during the service. It wasn't long before his words proved prophetic.

Lessons to Be Learned

Christians everywhere prayed for Takoosh and her family, and for the believers in Iran who were going through such a difficult time. Thousands of letters and cards were sent. Their greetings were appreciated, but the wound in Takoosh's spirit seemed beyond repair. As the reality of Haik's murder sank in, she found herself in a mighty spiritual struggle.

Takoosh's heart was filled with hatred toward the murderers of her husband. She hated the Muslims who had brought this tremendous grief upon her and her family. Thoughts of vindication festered in her mind. She was afraid of her own rage, afraid that she would lose control and strike someone with her car or cause injury to an innocent person.

When friends visited Takoosh some months later, she shook her head and said, "I've been in God's University. I started out in the lowest grade, but slowly and steadily he began to work in my heart. First, I simply had to be *willing* to forgive the murderers. Forgiveness started with a decision of the will, and the emotions followed much later. One day, after giving God permission to take it away, I realized that the hatred was gone. At last I could forgive the people who killed my husband."

Takoosh had won a battle, but it was not long before she became aware of another hurdle. God was asking her to not only forgive her enemies but to *love* them.

"Lord, you're asking too much," she cried out to him. "How can I love them when they killed the love of my life?"

God gently took her by the hand and helped her. Little by little, step by step, she came to the point where she realized that she *could* love her enemies. She began to see the Muslim extremists the way God saw them—as lost sheep without a Shepherd. God asked Takoosh to love, and he enabled her to love. He helped her to pass the second test.

"But I still wasn't quite ready to graduate from God's University," she said. "The process was not over. God told me that he wanted me to praise and thank him for what had happened."

It was impossible. Forgiveness and love she could deal with dutifully, but praise required her to sing, to rejoice, to celebrate. How could anyone expect her to do that? God knew how much Haik had meant to her, how she needed him and depended on him.

"Still, I wanted to be obedient and grow in the Lord," Takoosh explained. "So again I had no other choice. With my mouth I started to thank the Lord, even though my heart was crying at the same time. My heart was not ready, but I obeyed with my mouth. And God, as before, started to work in my soul."

The Christian men and women in the Tehran church went out of their way to help the Hovsepian family. During the days Haik was missing, and after the news of his death was confirmed, church members and many local pastors took turns in comforting Takoosh and the children.

For a long time they took care of her everyday needs in the most practical ways. They shopped, they cooked, they cleaned, they served guests. There was not a day that Takoosh was left alone. Someone was always there to comfort her, to encourage her from the Scriptures, and to provide for her.

"Though I missed my family a lot, there was not a moment after Haik's death that I wished that they were with me," Takoosh shared. "I received all the love, care, and comfort I needed from the church."

The Lord himself was real to Takoosh in personal, sometimes amazingly tangible ways. God demonstrated to her that he was not only interested in providing for her big needs but was also concerned about the smallest details of her life. One of the little comforts Takoosh enjoyed was eating chocolate. One day, to her regret, she realized that she had only a little piece left. As she ate it she prayed, "Please, Lord, you know how I love chocolate. Would you send me some more?"

That same day some visitors from Canada and the United States arrived in her apartment. She gratefully unwrapped their gifts—toys and clothes for the other martyrs' families. And, then, at the very last, she joyfully opened something that had been brought especially for her—chocolate. Once again, Takoosh was reminded of her heavenly Father's unfailing care.

One of Takoosh's most difficult times was when Rebecca, their daughter, got married. Takoosh needed supernatural grace to somehow make it a joyful day for the young couple. Haik and Takoosh had been looking forward to this happy occasion together. Now she had to go through it alone. While the house was being decorated for the wedding, Takoosh quietly cried out to the Lord to help her through it.

It was a day of immense joy, because the two young Christians were starting out their lives together with God's blessing. Takoosh was thankful that her daughter had been given a godly husband, but for her, the day felt empty and bleak without Haik there to celebrate with them.

A Matter of Life and Death

Takoosh wasn't the only grieving Christian widow in Iran. In December 1990, Pastor Soodmand, a convert from Islam, was hanged near the city of Mashad. His wife, who was blind, had a very hard time coping with his death, but Takoosh was able to share with her what she was going through. Although Mrs. Soodmand was comforted to know that others, like Takoosh, have experienced grief much like her own, she continues to need our prayers.

As it turned out, Haik was not the only Christian pastor to lay down his life in Iran that year. In June, after six months of freedom, Mehdi Dibaj was murdered in a park, leaving his four children behind. He died as a martyr, too, even though the government blamed a terrorist group, the Moedjaheddin Khalq, for his sudden death.

Dibaj's body was released only two hours before his funeral, and even then the family was not allowed to open the coffin. This heroic servant of God had been willing to lay down his life from the start. His wife had left him during the years of his detention, and his four children suffered doubly—first they had lost their "adoptive" father, Haik, and now their own father was gone. But like the Hovsepian children, they followed in their father's footsteps and continued to serve the Lord.

Only a few days after Mehdi Dibaj's death, Pastor Tateos Michaelian was shot and killed, leaving his wife, Juliet, and three grown children. Another leader was gone. Pastor Michaelian had succeeded Haik as chairman of the Council of Protestant Pastors in Iran. Only five months after he took on this responsibility, he paid for it with his life. His wife now lives in California with one of her married daughters.

On September 28, 1996, the worldwide Christian community was shaken again. The body of Pastor Ravanbakhsh Yousefi was found hanging from a tree some twenty miles from his house in Ghaem-Shahr. He had left his home early that day to spend time in prayer and meditation. Still another Christian minister had laid down his life in Iran. And another widow, Akhtar, now faced life alone with her two small children.

The sudden death of her husband devastated Akhtar. Today, like Takoosh, she is walking the long road of sorrow, working through her pain step by step. Every day at three o'clock, Takoosh calls Akhtar. More than anyone else, she understands what Akhtar is going through.

Christians around the world often pray for their brothers and sisters in Iran, and well we should. These faithful believers are confronted with one of the most virulent persecutions on earth. But a pastor from that country, who visited the States recently, told us, "You pray for us, but maybe you need our prayers more. We cannot afford to wander away from Jesus. We need him so much for every small detail of our lives that we *have* to stay close to him. It's a matter of life and death for us."

That matter of life and death—faith in the Lord Jesus Christ—has been tried and tested in the hearts of Takoosh and her children. They continue to value our prayers for healing, wisdom, and guidance. They live in California now, but dealing with the past and moving courageously into the future continue to challenge them.

But one thing will never change. What Paul wrote to the Christians in Philippi, he would surely say to the Hovsepian family and all the other wives and children who have lost their loved ones in Iran: "He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus" (Phil. 1:6).

Reflection and Discussion

1. What are some of the main social and religious realities that affect Christian workers in the Middle East?

2. How might stressors be different for national pastors and expatriate workers?

3. What are some of the main stereotypes about the Middle East? How could these be changed?

4. Which aspects of the accounts in the case studies touched you the most and why?

5. List a few practical things that could be done to help Christians being persecuted for their faith in the Middle East.

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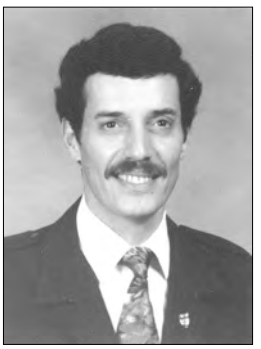

Naji Abi-Hashem *is a Lebanese-American clinical and cultural psychologist and an ordained minister, currently based in Seattle, Washington. He received his M.Div. from Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary (1985) and his doctorate in psychology from Rosemead School of Psychology, Biola University (1992). Naji is also a diplomate of the American Board of Psychological Specialties (1998) and worked nine years with Minirth-Meier New Life Clinics. His international service has included missionary work, counseling, writing, editing, teaching, networking, consultation, and caring for caregivers. Special areas of interest are relating the Christian faith to clinical practice, pastoral care and counseling, Middle Eastern and cultural studies, grief and bereavement, political and peace psychology, existential philosophy, and contemplative spirituality. Email: NajiAH@worldnet.att.net.*

Photo Open Doors

Anneke Companjen *and her husband Johan are former Christian and Missionary Alliance missionaries to Vietnam. Since their return to their native country, The Netherlands, they have served the persecuted, suffering church with the ministry of Open Doors. Anneke has traveled extensively and seen firsthand the tragic toll of persecution. She gave a voice to women throughout the persecuted church in her book* ***Hidden Sorrow, Lasting Joy****. This book has been published in 10 languages and tells the stories of 20 women who have suffered because they, along with their husbands, chose to follow Christ despite opposition and danger. Through speaking engagements around the globe, Anneke brings awareness of how these individuals pay a heavy price for their faith in Jesus Christ. Email: Annekec@od.org.*

Doing Member Care In Red Zones: Examples From the Middle East

RAYMOND HICKS

Several "Red zones" exist in the Middle East and pose potential danger to the well-being of mission personnel. Red zones are specific areas marked by ethno-political tensions, instability, and potential or actual violence. The author looks at the warning signs of Red-zone stress, offers suggestions for persons living in Red zones, and provides guidelines for administrators and leaders to help their Red-zone personnel.

The term "Red zone" refers to those areas of the world where there is intense stress on a regular and sometimes daily basis, brought on by perceived or actual danger and threats to one's safety. This is true regarding many parts of our world, but it is particularly true in the Middle East, where I have served for the past 25 years. These Red zones are dangerous just by the mere fact that living and ministering in one of these locations places the individual, couple, family, and/or team at risk. Some examples of Red zones in the Middle East would include areas within Gaza and the West Bank, Lebanon, Yemen, and Syria, to name just a few.

Mission personnel who live in a cross-cultural context usually experience plenty of stress to tax their resiliency skills and reserves. It is no easy task to learn a new language, a new culture, and a new set of verbal and nonverbal cues, as well as develop a new package of living skills. In fact, it sometimes takes two or more years to acquire sufficient skills before one sees any reduction in stress. When these adjustment stressors are added to Red-zone stressors, the mix can be incapacitating, producing fear, anger, volatility, hopelessness, and helplessness even in the best trained and most dedicated of personnel. The following are some of the dangerous experiences that can cause any location to turn into a Red zone. When coupled with the normal stressors of cross-cultural living, these experiences can thrust personnel onto the quick track towards emotional, physical, or spiritual burnout:

- Potential threats of robbery, rape, or abduction.
- Death threats.
- Active repression of Christianity by governments and/or militant religious leadership.

- Terrorism and intense anti-Western sentiment.
- Random acts of violence, attacks, and shootings.
- Being in close proximity to local people who have been shot, wounded, maimed, and/or killed. This stress intensifies if some of the people affected are known.
- Political instability and political violence which create warlike/coup-like conditions.
- Unchecked anger, hatred, and violence directed towards expatriate Westerners or towards those seen to sympathize with disavowed groups/causes.
- Armed civilian and government warfare activities with clashes in civilian areas, increasing the potential of danger, injury, or death if a person is in the wrong place at the wrong time.
- High unemployment, low wages, and large-scale hunger and physical needs which are accompanied by violence and political upheaval.
- Extremely poor economic situations, which can lead to an uncharacteristic rise in theft and armed robbery, especially of Westerners or the upper class.
- Curfews and travel restrictions.

This list could go on with increasing intensity and vividness. Any one of these characteristics by itself would not necessarily constitute a Red zone. However, when these Red-zone stressors appear in clusters of three or more in a specific location, then the area would be classified as a Red zone.

A good example of this would be the Gaza Strip in Palestine. Given the conflict between the Palestinians and the Israelis, the observable characteristics of a Red zone are clear in this location.

- Death threats have been made on Western personnel serving with various organizations.
- Death threats have been directed toward local Palestinians who have not followed the "prescribed group resistance."
- Palestinian and other Christians have found themselves the target of militants who verbally abhor alcohol sale and usage of any kind. In addition, the Christian community found themselves struggling to maintain their Christian identity and at the same time participate in the activities of the Muslim majority population vis-à-vis demonstrations, violence, stone-throwing, fire-bombing, and other acts of resistance. (Christianity here often involves more of a cultural heritage than a lifestyle and relationship with God.)
- Random acts of shooting and bombings occur on a regular basis. Israeli settlers and soldiers have wounded and killed Palestinians regularly in demonstrations, drive-by shootings, ambushes, and assassinations. Palestinians have wounded and killed Israeli soldiers and settlers who live and serve in the occupying army in the Gaza Strip. By the end of 2000, the death tally in the most recent conflict between Israelis and Palestinians was over 400, the vast majority being Palestinians.
- Nearly every Palestinian family has been touched by the wounding and/or death of family members. Therefore, it is very common for Westerners working in the Gaza Strip to know someone who has been wounded or killed.
- The closure of the borders between Palestine and Israel has played havoc with the local Palestinian economy. Palestinian businesses are not able to get supplies for their companies. Therefore, employees for those businesses are not able to work. Palestinians who work in Israel are not able to cross over to their jobs. As a result, the unemployment rate for Palestinians in Gaza has been reported to be approaching 50%. The average income is about $2 per day. Personnel working in such conditions find themselves extremely stressed, guilty, and saddened when they see such widespread poverty and so many unmet physical needs 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
- Terrorism is widespread. No one knows where the next attack by the Israeli soldiers or by Palestinians will happen. But the fact is, it *will* happen, and it is very likely that it will be close. As a result, cur-

fews and travel restrictions are commonplace.

- In the Gaza Strip, one of the most densely populated locations on earth, political instability is a reality. Aging leadership and the more militant political youth often have a clash of ideologies. Sometimes these clashes can turn violent to various degrees, from shouting and fights to shootings and death.
- Anger at the unquestioning support that the West gives Israel has led to hatred being directed towards Westerners and Western businesses.

Life in the Red Zone: A Case Study

The following is a family case study that illustrates what I mean by Red-zone life and the effects it has on personnel. I have changed the family information to protect their identity, but the Red-zone details are factual.

Rob and Carol are first-term international workers who have been living in a Red-zone area for three years. Both are educated to the master's level. Before overseas service, they were highly successful in their Western context and were leaders in their community and church. Both are energetic, highly motivated, and very focused on the task of reaching their unreached people group. Rob and Carol have three teenage children. As a family, they have learned the local language and fit in well with the culture.

Rob, Carol, and their children have had their share of bumps in the past three years. The children had difficulty at first adjusting to the new culture. They experienced normal adjustment problems of attending an expatriate school outside of the Red zone and at the same time living within a Red zone. The marital relationship between Rob and Carol weathered the stressors of the initial adjustment to their new location.

However, the stress that Rob, Carol, and their children have experienced in the past year and a half was compounded by the intensity of the stressors in their Red-zone location. Almost all of the Red-zone stressors above were present in their lives on a daily to weekly basis. Three examples which added to their daily stress were (1) Rob and Carol had to buy protective glass for their vehicle because they had been stoned by demonstrating youths; (2) they had to vary their travel routes daily, in order to avoid military roadblocks and demonstrations by militant crowds; and (3) several times they were not able to contact or pick their children up from school because the military had closed their travel routes.

All of these stressors are adversely affecting Rob and Carol's relationship in every area of their lives. Let us look at some of the key areas that have suffered.

- *Relationship with God*—Rob and Carol have lost joy in their relationship with God. They have little to no time for devotional time and prayer. They are "in the desert" spiritually.
- *Relationship with self*—Areas of "margin" (i.e., having time and energy for restoration and renewal) in their individual lives are at a minimum. There is little time for relaxation, family, or friends. There is no time for exercise. There is a marked lack of energy and initiative
- *Relationship as a couple*—It seems that many conversations lead to a disagreement or an argument. There is not much mutual encouragement, and nagging has become a way of life in the way Rob and Carol relate to each another.
- *Relationship with children*—There is tension between the parents and the children. Nagging has become a part of this relationship too. The children talk a lot about going back to Europe or leaving the Red zone and living closer to their friends outside the Red zone.
- *Relationship with local people*—Barriers seem to arise more often in their relationships with nationals. As the needs of the local people increased exponentially, Rob and Carol's ability to meet their human, physical, and hunger needs decreased at the same rate. This is one of

the biggest producers of stress, and it produced guilt, sadness, and frustration in Rob and Carol

- *Relationship with colleagues*—Since Rob and Carol live some distance from their colleagues, it is difficult for the colleagues to understand Rob and Carol's situation. Instead of talking more with their colleagues, Rob and Carol became more distant, making the void of discouragement wider and the voices of encouragement weaker and less frequent.

As you can see from this brief description of Rob and Carol's Red-zone experience, they are well on a "crash-and-burn trajectory" of emotional, physical, and/or spiritual burnout. I am not sure how much longer they could have handled the Red-zone pressure-cooker context without relief or intervention. In fact, the ever-present pressures had the potential to cause them to reassess their call to missions and potentially lead them away from the unreached people group to whom God had specifically called them. Rob and Carol's Red-zone scenario is all too common in the areas of the Middle East and in other Red zones of the world.

Proactive Steps

What can help Rob and Carol's scenario and similar circumstances of other personnel living in Red zones? What could they do to help themselves? What are some proactive steps that they could take to release some of the pressure from their "Red zone pressure cooker"? Two key strategies are (1) to learn to recognize the warning signs of individual Red-zone stress and (2) to develop ways to deal with that stress, especially by establishing clear personal, couple, and family margins. Dr. Kenneth Williams (2000, p. 171) defines *margin* as "a sufficient reserve of time, energy (spiritual, emotional, interpersonal, and physical), and money to provide for our needs and the needs of others." Personal development of margins allows our bodies, our emotions, and our spiritual lives to be healed, restored, and renewed from the effects of Red-zone stress.

Recognizing the Warning Signs

Over the years in the Middle East, I have noted five major warning signs of Red-zone stress, both personally and in colleagues. These are depression, suppression of feelings, lack of focus, constant fear, and spiritual dryness.

1. Depression

Some of the major symptoms of depression include sleeping too much or too little, lethargy, headaches, increased irritability and anger, lack of interest in pleasurable activities, changes in eating habits, avoiding responsibilities and relationships (e.g., watching numerous videos or spending long hours on the computer), addictive behaviors, withdrawal from others, and decreased intimacy between husband and wife. When a few of these symptoms begin to cluster together over a period of several weeks, depression might be present. It is important to consult with a health care professional.

2. Suppressed feelings

Fatigue, relationship struggles, psychosomatic problems, and psychological problems can be the result of unexpressed thoughts and feelings. The longer that these stressful experiences remain unprocessed—not shared with/discussed with confidants—the greater the possibility of further complications.

Bob is an example of what happens when someone suppresses feelings and thoughts. As the Red-zone stressors began to increase, Bob became more introverted. Instead of finding someone to talk with about his fear of death if he were kidnapped, he stuffed those thoughts and fears deep inside. When he was threatened with death at a roadblock, Bob told no one. He pushed those thoughts and feelings down deep. When he saw the injustice of the military towards civilians through unwarranted beatings on young

men, he drove those thoughts and feelings deeper within. He talked less and less with his wife and colleagues about his inner life and experiences. At the same time, he found himself becoming angry more often, especially with the local people with whom he was working. Everything they did, said, or did not do infuriated him. He found himself yelling at other drivers when he was driving. He snapped at his wife when she made simple requests of him. He was short-tempered with his children, and they often asked him, "What is wrong, Daddy?" to which he responded with a quick, "Nothing!" His life slowly became more reactive than responsive to people and events around him.

Bob began dealing with his anger in very unhealthy ways. He would often state things like, "I am not angry," "It's not my fault," "You're too sensitive," or, "I don't want to talk about it." His way of dealing with differences became one of angry confrontations or silence. As Bob's personal stress and tension began to build, most of his conversations became complaint sessions. Matters of the heart ceased to be topics of conversation.

After a year like this, Bob began to have panic attacks, during which he felt extremely out of control and thought that he was going to die. These panic attacks were frightening and sometimes debilitating. Bob would exhibit one or several of the following on an increasingly frequent basis: irregular heartbeat, shortness of breath, fear of death and dying, chest discomfort, or abdominal distress. He actually thought that he was having major heart problems.

Initially, Bob kept his panic struggles from his wife and colleagues. However, after a particularly scary attack, he confided in his wife and went to his medical doctor for help. After a complete physical evaluation, it was determined that nothing was wrong physically. However, things were wrong emotionally and spiritually. Bob's physician encouraged him to see a counselor. He contacted the member care specialist in his organization and was referred to someone in his location who was qualified and available to help.

Bob's counseling initially focused on his personal relationship with God. It was difficult for Bob when he realized that the most important thing to him, his relationship with God, was one of the first relationships to be affected negatively. In addition, the counselor helped Bob look at his Red-zone stressors, his thoughts, his feelings, and his fears from a biblical perspective, as well as from a physical and psychological perspective. After a little more than two months, Bob began to return to his outgoing and energetic lifestyle. His relationship with God returned to its primary importance. His role as husband and father took on new meaning. He learned to share his thoughts and feelings more freely with his wife and with a trusted colleague. He learned to share his fears more candidly. He began to look at his Red-zone context as a place where local people could see God in his life rather than seeing it as a place where God could not be found. Bob actually became more functional than he had been in the past. He related better to family, peers, and nationals, without panic attacks plaguing him and restricting his activities.

Not all cases like Bob's can be treated on the field within a Red zone. Sometimes it is necessary to remove the person and his/her family from the area, so that intervention can take place without the active stressors of the Red zone. This kind of approach assists the person(s) by immediately reducing the stressors and allowing them to process thoughts, feelings, and fears from a distance and from a location of safety and support.

3. Lack of focus

Lack of focus is extremely hard on workers in Red zones. Personnel serving overseas usually have a high work/ministry ethic. Moreover, most are supported financially by special gifts and donations from organizations or persons in their home country who believe in them and in their work/ministry. Therefore, when a

lack of focus sets in and personnel begin to realize that they are unproductive, their sense of duty, dedication, and accountability to those supporters and to their leadership causes them to feel guilty. As the lack of focus continues, the feelings of guilt, failure, and unproductiveness, when added to other Red-zone warning signs, can cause the person to sink deeper into the quicksand of despair.

4. Constant fear

This type of fear pervades life during waking moments and even during sleep. It is something that gnaws at one's heart, mind, and soul. The fear can be a personal fear of death, dying, bombing, terrorism, abduction, rape, murder, robbery, spiritual warfare attacks, or any number of other fear-producing dangers and threats. This fear can be for oneself, a family member, a friend, or a team member. It can keep us from doing the simplest of tasks and can make our behavior erratic. After being stopped and threatened at gunpoint at a roadblock by masked militants one afternoon, I found myself fearing what was around the bend on every street I traveled for the next two months. I became very edgy because of the fear that was just below the surface of my thoughts and feelings.

5. Spiritual dryness

The deserts of the Middle East have been locations of spiritual renewal and the strengthening of relationships between man and God for centuries. Jesus and Paul are two prime examples of this. Monks have gone off to these deserts to live, in order to commune with God. God calls us at times into specific desert-type experiences to woo us and develop us.

Many times, though, the spiritual lives of our personnel have become dry and barren like those deserts. I know that was the case with me. Instead of being the place that drew me closer to God, there was a period during the most intense time of Red-zone stress when I wandered farther away from God. Prayer became difficult, if not impossible. I found excuses not to read His Word. In short, I cut off the source of hope—my relationship with God—in the midst of darkness. Consider some of the reasons for such dry, spiritual conditions:

- There can be a lack of spiritual preparation for the spiritual warfare present in Red zones. Either no one told us or we did not listen to the fact that the Red-zone location in which we find ourselves is a spiritual warfare battle zone.
- There can be a lack of believers or a lack of fellowship options with other believers in the Red zone. One of the biggest mistakes which sending organizations make is to send a "unit" out to a Red zone by themselves. Sending a couple to a remote location without team members or a support base with local believers is a prescription for intense attacks of spiritual warfare. Without the spiritual support from a team, they can be defeated and disheartened quickly.
- There can be an absence of corporate and personal praise and worship time. All of us need the encouragement, strength, support, and power gained through corporate praise and worship. This is even more necessary in a Red zone.
- There can be a lack of an adequate prayer support base around the world for the specific needs and challenges of Red-zone personnel. Such a base is essential for Red-zone personnel. Without it, we face the spiritual warfare battles alone, when the Father would have us face them with the body of Christ.
- There can be a lack of a consistent and established prayer and devotional lifestyle. The spiritual disciplines are critical for all people in Red zones. Prayer, fasting, Bible reading, worship, silence, solitude, serving, stewardship, and evangelism are all disciplines which will enhance Red-zone living. In practicing these, one's relationship with God will grow and become more intimate.
- There can be an inability to prioritize life's activities. Business, work, and

ministry can begin to take on more importance than being with God.

Such spiritual dryness can lead us to wander in the wilderness of the Red zone without direction, hope, vision, and, most importantly, without the sustaining relationship of the Father.

Strategies for Red-Zone Living

A strategy is a plan for achieving a specific purpose. In the case of Red-zone living, developing strategies for living is essential. Here are 10 strategies to help personnel deal with the stress of living within a Red zone.

1. Give others permission to speak into your life

One of the most important things that my wife and I did when we were living in a Red zone was to give another trusted couple permission to talk freely and specifically with us about our lives. We found that living in a Red zone caused us to develop fuzzy boundaries. That means that we kept saying to ourselves, "Things aren't so bad," or, "We can handle it." Then when things got worse, such as a bomb exploding on the road just minutes before we passed by, we said, "That wasn't as bad as I thought it would be." However, when we kept moving our boundaries back, we were actually on a daily downhill slide, losing touch with our thoughts and feelings and losing the ability to cope in healthy ways. Our friends, who lived outside the Red zone, could urge us to leave the Red zone if they saw or sensed that we were beginning to minimize its realities and dangers. If they told us to get out, we trusted them enough to leave for a period of time (one to two weeks), in order to re-evaluate our situation to see if we were capable of continuing our work and ministry. Speaking into the life of another is the biblical principle found in Ephesians 4:25, where we are told, "Therefore, each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body."

2. Get help

All of us feel depressed at times. All of us have fears. All of us have times of blurred focus on our tasks. All of us have times of spiritual dryness. These are normal occurrences. But when they become regular attributes, seek out help. Listen to what others are saying to you and what your body and reactions are saying. Get a physical exam to make sure that there is not something medically wrong that is causing some of your symptoms. Find a counselor or a trusted friend who can help you monitor what is going on in your life. Check in with a leader and/or member care worker in your organization, so that he/she can talk with you about your Red-zone stressors.

3. Remember the Greatest Commandment and God's sovereignty in the midst of your troubles

First, in Mark 12:28-31, Jesus shares with us the importance of relationships and of staying connected. Of all the commandments, He said, "The most important one 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."

Secondly, John 17 tells us we are *never* alone, no matter what our circumstances. We are never alone in the midst of our pain and suffering. God is always present to comfort, support, and encourage, whether the suffering is happening to us or to the people whom we serve. God is always sovereign in every circumstance. He will have victory in our lives and in the Red zones. We must keep this fact of Scripture ever before us, even when we do not recognize it. The fact of His sovereignty is not dependent on our recognition or awareness. It is dependent on the truth of His Word and the reality of His presence.

Those of us living in Red zones must stay connected with God. He is our main source of strength and hope. This is not some "obligatory God comment" but an important reminder about our relationship with Him. Stay focused on God and keep yourself immersed in His Word on a daily basis. Communicate with Him in prayer, even when it is difficult. He will answer.

4. Be prepared for spiritual warfare

Spiritual warfare, as outlined in Ephesians 6:10-20, is perhaps the most important area to be understood and practiced in Red-zone life. Prayer for deliverance, spiritual discernment, demonic oppression, and spiritual struggles "in the heavenlies" are not just abstract concepts but realities of life. Defeat in the battles of spiritual warfare can be devastating for field personnel. It is in these battles that we lose heart, lose focus, and lose the intimate relationship with our First Love.

Many of us in the Red zone were ill-prepared for what awaited us in the arena of spiritual warfare. One striking example was a couple, Tim and Laine, who were having some marital difficulties. As it turned out, the husband was very depressed. He constantly put himself down and downplayed his ability to learn Arabic and to be an effective witness. My wife and I called in another couple so that the four of us could pray for Tim and Laine. We prayed with them for two hours. During the prayer time, Tim heard a word from the Lord that confirmed that Tim was trying to do all of this without Him. In addition, Tim realized that the language helper whom he was using was involved in Islamic curses and had called some on Tim. Immediately after our prayer time, Tim's entire countenance changed. A significant inner shift had also happened through prayer. Tim and his family returned to their Red zone, and he entered his spiritual warfare battle with renewed faith and hope. He became more intimate with the Father in his devotional time, developed a prayer strategy and support base, and initiated strategies for dealing with the curses directed at him by his language helper. Later Tim reported that his entire attitude had improved, his marital relationship was stronger, and his depression had lifted.

There are divergent views about spiritual warfare; however, there are plenty of good, balanced books on the subject. Check with your pastor or colleague to see what books would be of most benefit for you from your biblical perspective. However, remember the importance of the armor of God. George Otis, Jr. (1998, p. 187) has a helpful perspective: "Putting on the armor of God is synonymous with daily surrender to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. … We simply dedicate our first conscious thoughts each morning to the will of the Master. Spiritual armor becomes lifestyle when, for the balance of the day, we choose to walk in the consciousness of His presence and purpose."

5. Work at marital growth

Spouses must not take each other for granted. It is so easy to neglect this relationship because other things seem more important at the time. Needy people, ministry demands, deadlines, and other tasks call out for our time and energy. At the end of the day, there is little left for your spouse. When you add Red-zone stress to this picture, you can end up as two individuals in a marriage who have lost the time, energy, and will to work on that relationship.

Growing apart does not occur overnight. I have worked with couples in missions who have grown so far apart that they have become two people living alone together. When this happens, the possibility of marital infidelity is just around the corner. Make time for your spouse. Maintain spiritual growth as a couple. Work at keeping the flame of romance burning. Date your spouse. Have fun and play together. Get away alone as a couple, even if it is only for a night. Be diligent to communicate clearly and regularly. Take

advantage of marriage enrichment opportunities and retreats. Your relationship has the potential to sustain you in the midst of any Red-zone storm or stress.

6. Exercise

In the Red zone, our bodies can suffer from lack of physical exercise. It may not be safe or acceptable just to go out and exercise. Our usual exercise and eating habits can change. Consequently, our emotions and spiritual life can be affected negatively, because our heart, mind, soul, and strength are all intertwined. If one area suffers, such as the physical, the other areas are affected. A frequent question that I get from both men and women about exercise in Red zones is, "How and where do I exercise in my Red zone?" A stationary bicycle, a treadmill, step aerobics, and isometrics are all excellent ways to exercise. Videotapes can be purchased covering all aspects of exercise and can be followed in the privacy of your living room in front of a TV.

7. Develop confidants and close friends

Many married people would say, "My spouse is my best friend." That is great. However, at the same time, all of us would benefit greatly from having at least one same-gender confidant in our lives. This is also true, of course, for singles. One of the first things that my wife and I prayed for when we moved into a Red zone was a friend for her and a friend for me. I needed someone outside my marital relationship with whom I could relate as "guy to guy." As a rule, men usually do not cultivate a "best friend" relationship so easily. Women in Red zones usually have an easier time in finding that special friend. When you have a friendship like Ruth and Naomi or Jonathan and David, it will bless you and challenge you in your life and ministry. My Red-zone best friend was a strength and support to me, and I became that for him. It takes precious time and energy to develop such a friendship, but the benefit for both of you will be worth the effort.

8. Give encouragement

There are two statements in Scripture that tell us to do something daily. The first is Luke 9:23, "If anyone would come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me." The second is Hebrews 3:13, "But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called 'today,' so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness." Without regular encouragement, we can lose hope, vision, and focus. With it, we can do far beyond what we thought possible. Encouragement is a two-way street—it is mutual. Encouragement is both a discipline and a practice. If we are not encouraging others daily, we all run the risk of being "hardened by sin's deceitfulness." A network and ethos of encouragement for one another while in a Red zone is a good antidote for despair. It helps us see the potential good and God's power even in very difficult circumstances.

9. Take time to talk about and process issues

When anger, fear, hatred, and frustration begin creeping into your Red-zone life, find someone with whom you can talk about these issues. Intentionally seek out your spouse, your best friend, an accountability partner, a colleague, a member care specialist, or others. When we lived in a Red zone in the late 1980s and early 1990s, I found myself on the dangerous ground of hating the soldiers who were killing and maiming the people to whom God had called me. As that hatred began to grow, I realized that I was slipping outside of God's presence and will for my life. My wife and my best friend helped me work through many issues, helped me renew my relationship with the Lord, and helped me maintain a good perspective on life.

10. Play and have fun

Set apart time for relaxation, renewal, and recreation—have fun! These kinds of experiences have the potential to make our Red-zone living more bearable. Play

games, go on a hike, or do other activities as a couple, family, group of couples, group of singles, team, or any other kind of grouping. It takes our minds off our Red-zone lives and allows us to step away from those ever-present worries, fears, frustrations, dangers, and stresses.

During the height of the "Intifada" (the conflict between the Palestinians and the Israelis in the late 1980s and early '90s), tensions were extremely high. We were stressed because many people we knew had been beaten, imprisoned, or shot. On top of that, we were upset by the constant roadblocks, curfews, and tense atmosphere. One weekend, about five families decided to take an all-day hike in the Judean wilderness. We hiked down canyons, forded streams, laughed, talked, and played along the way. Our minds and bodies totally disengaged from the tension of the West Bank. We returned to our homes exhausted but rejuvenated. Our physical bodies had been stretched to the maximum. Our emotions had been allowed to run free and play in the Judean hill country. Our spirits were renewed as we talked and laughed with our colleagues, who all had two things in common—our faith in God and the stress of living in a Red zone.

Guidelines for Administrators and Leaders

Sending agencies have an essential role in the lives of their personnel who live in Red zones. Mission leaders such as field directors are often the first-line, main member care providers in many situations. Here are a number of things for administrators and leaders to do, based on my experiences in living in Red zones, working as an administrator, and helping as a member care specialist.

Suggestions: Five Things to Avoid

1. Avoid overstatements

If you have never lived in a Red zone for six months or more, be careful not to overstate the phrase, "I understand what you are going through and feeling." People in Red zones are extremely sensitive. Statements like this are not received well by Red-zone personnel. This is especially true when administrators and leadership make such statements from the safety and security of their home offices in Western countries.

2. Avoid downplaying danger and stress

When talking with your personnel in Red zones, be careful not to trivialize, negate, or over-spiritualize the Red-zone dangers and stresses that they are experiencing. The best thing that you can do is speak from a caring and compassionate heart that feels the pain and the hurt of the Red-zone person and that does more listening than speaking.

3. Avoid conflict

Try not to react negatively to your personnel in Red zones, whether in person, on the telephone, or in emails. They may be quite difficult to communicate with and may not even realize it. They do not need the added stress of being in conflict with their leadership. There is a time and a place for dealing with difficult issues, but emails and telephone calls are not the right place. Save confrontations for face-to-face encounters outside their Red zone.

4. Avoid increasing personnel workloads

Try not to increase the work, ministry, or administrative loads of Red-zone personnel. Much of the time they are just trying to keep their emotional heads above the water, and any added responsibilities will only tend to increase the frustration, stress, and worry. One of the biggest workload problems that Red-zone personnel face is the "traveling spouse." I know of many organizations that have some of their personnel traveling 30-60% of the time! This is a prescription for burnout for the one traveling. Also, it is a burnout prescription for the spouse who stays behind and "tends the fort," watches the kids, and

handles all the other aspects of living. Usually the one who stays behind is the wife. In addition, the tension caused by this kind of intense, husband-wife separation can play havoc with the marital relationship, particularly for those living in a Red zone. Administrators would be wise to keep the travel of their Red-zone personnel to a minimum.

5. Avoid making decisions without personnel input

Try not to make decisions for Red-zone personnel without their input. Always seek to value their input, and include their input in your decision-making process. Not to include them in decisions directly affecting them will set you as leader in conflict with your Red-zone personnel. Try to make decisions for these personnel with them from within the Red zone, not from the comfort and security of a Western office location.

Suggestions: Ten Things to Do

1. Provide a range of member care support

Never be afraid to send help to your Red-zone personnel. They will appreciate it. Crisis response workshops, spiritual life seminars/retreats, marriage enrichment, family life and education consultation, career development, debriefings, and other such opportunities will aid your personnel greatly. Member care shows them how much the organization values them and invests in them. Remember to include "member care resources" in the annual planning, budgets, and strategy development. Good member care is proactive—far more than just offering counseling when someone struggles. As I have talked with various mission personnel over the past five years, including those serving in Red zones, one key request keeps coming to the surface: "We need member care in order to make it."

2. Keep in regular telephone contact

Email is great. However, your personnel in Red zones need to hear your voice, and they need to know that you care, support, and encourage them. The frequency of your calls should be on a weekly basis to once per month, depending on how difficult their situation is. It would be helpful to have a set time and day on which you will call, so that your personnel are expecting to hear from you rather than being surprised by your call. Try not to mix a business call with a "checking in" call to people in the Red zone. You may think that you have checked in, but they will receive it as your doing business first and your checking in as an afterthought.

3. Listen

When you talk on the telephone, listen to what is being said and what is not being said. From a caring pastoral perspective, ask for their thoughts, ideas, and feelings. Listen for signs of over-rationalization, over-spiritualizing, hypersensitivity, fuzzy boundaries, or trivializing of their situation. Listen for unspoken cries for help. In addition, listen for the warning signs mentioned earlier in this chapter. Your personnel may not always realize just how in need they are. If you cannot determine what to do, you might want to set up a telephone consult with a member care specialist and your personnel, just to make sure that you are reading their situation clearly.

4. Be an encourager

You may be the main source of encouragement that your personnel receive, especially if they are in isolated locations by themselves. One of the major mistakes that organizational leadership makes in the placement of personnel, especially in Red zones, is the putting of one family unit in a Red-zone location by themselves. We place our personnel at great emotional and spiritual risk when we do not prepare and send out compatible families "two by

two." A family unit needs the nurture, support, and encouragement of another family in difficult Red-zone locations.

5. Provide opportunities for breaks

Personnel living in Red zones need the opportunity to get away from the dangers of their location regularly. It is very difficult for individuals, couples, and families to stay in the "heat of battle" without hope of relief. Many organizations mandate such breaks and provide financial support at times to help personnel get away. A helpful amount of time might be two weeks every six months, but this should be determined in consultation with your Red-zone personnel, member care personnel, and other leaders. In some Red zones, these breaks would need to be out of country. In other cases, it might be somewhere away from the conflict zone but within the geographical country. Some organizations have set up "safe houses" that are available for their personnel as well as for those from other organizations.

6. Visit your personnel whenever possible

Visits are so important by a member care worker or leader from your organization or someone seconded from another organization. A stay for several days will provide you with much helpful information as to the difficulty and danger in that Red zone. It will allow you to walk alongside your personnel and to hear their joys, fears, difficulties, and hurts. In addition, it will allow you to minister to them. After you leave, your phone calls will take on added meaning to them and to you, because you will have a better understanding of their situation and therefore will be able to provide better support and encouragement.

7. Provide debriefing opportunities

Whenever any of your personnel get away from their Red zone for a break, meetings, conferences, or workshops, try to provide some kind of debriefing opportunity. For some, a regular Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD) might be in order, while for others, just listening to them and then helping them clarify their thoughts/feelings/plans will be beneficial.

8. Take directive leadership

The time may come for you as the leader to take a more directive leadership role for personnel serving in more difficult locations. If one of your family units appears to be slowly falling apart and heading for a breakdown, be ready to act on their behalf. Talk with them, and after consulting with others such as a member care specialist, be prepared to get them out for their own safety and well-being.

9. Monitor

It is important to monitor your personnel during and after their Red-zone service. Use your member care specialist to check in with them by email, telephone, and personal visits. If you do not have a member care specialist, then enlist the cooperation of another organization's specialist to assist your personnel. Also, when your personnel leave the Red zone, see that they have opportunity to be involved in a Critical Incident Stress Debriefing. The CISD is a very valuable tool which can help your personnel process their Red-zone experiences and possibly keep them from having stress-related difficulties later on.

10. Develop a Red-zone protocol and strategy

Each organization would do well to develop a Red-zone protocol so that it can appropriately monitor Red-zone stability and appropriately respond to Red-zone crises. The protocol should be developed and communicated with personnel before they enter a Red zone, usually during prefield orientation. Training in crisis and contingency management is also important. Some of the following things would be helpful to include in your protocol:

- Define a Red zone and have a way to monitor the degree of risk to personnel.

- Itemize work and ministry expectations of personnel.
- Provide exit strategies and clear criteria for departure.
- Provide opportunities for assistance from the organization and from a member care specialist.
- Provide resources for living in a Red zone (books on stress, exercise, spiritual growth, etc.).
- Outline an administrative strategy for dealing with Red zones (contingency plans). All administrators and leadership should be oriented to contingency management procedures.

Conclusion

Doing member care well in Red zones is the responsibility of all of us. First, member care is the responsibility of the personnel living in Red zones. Individuals, couples, and teams need to be proactive regarding their own member care. Each person needs to take steps towards developing healthy margins for living. Personnel need to be aware of Red-zone warning signs and the dangers inherent in not caring for oneself. In addition, they need to be willing to ask for help when they need it. Close friends especially provide a safety net of support and encouragement.

Secondly, member care is the responsibility of organizational and agency administrators and leadership. Good leaders do not just assume everything is OK just because they have not heard any cries for help. Rather, they regularly and sensitively check in with their Red-zone personnel. What they model and how they relate to personnel are key influences on the overall ethos and member care program of an agency. Dr. Eddie Pate, a good friend and field leader, made an excellent observation. He said, "In order to help my people make it long-term on the field (in Red zones), I need to do three things: Take care of my people, take care of my people, and take care of my people."

Thirdly, member care in Red zones is the responsibility of the member care specialists from the field team, mobile member care team, or the organization's home office. These specialists need to be available to spend quality time with personnel in order to assist them. In addition, they can apprise sending agencies about member care issues and needs. Member care specialists need to update their professional skills on a regular basis and make sure they have the breaks and support that they need as well. No one is immune from Red-zone stress! It would be helpful if member care specialists could live in a Red zone for a minimum of three to six months in order to better understand life and personnel in Red zones.

There is life in Red zones. It is possible to grow in one's relationship with God, self, and others. It is possible to find security in Him in the midst of stress and danger. Moreover, it is possible to carry out the task to which Red-zone personnel have been called. The love and support that come via good member care are keys to really making it in these difficult settings. Red zones will always be with us. May the Lord give us wisdom and hearts of compassion as we faithfully minister to needy people in these areas and as we diligently care for our workers.

Reflection and Discussion

1. What kinds of dangers and stressors describe the Red zone in which you live or in which personnel whom you know live?
2. What are some likely warning signs which you might experience to help you realize that life in a Red zone is adversely impacting you?
3. List a few ways that your organization could apply some of the suggestions made in this article.
4. Identify some personal strategies which are/were helpful to your Red-zone experience and which might be helpful to others ministering and living in Red zones.
5. What are some ways to further support national Christians who live and are "stuck" in Red zones?

References and Suggested Reading

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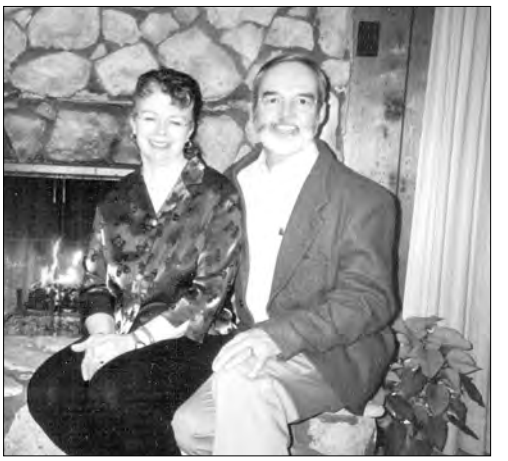

Raymond Hicks *and his wife Beverly have been involved for over 25 years in Red-zone living and ministry with the International Mission Board, SBC. Ray has assisted numerous other Christian organizations and non-governmental organizations as a member care consultant. He is currently serving as the Member Care Specialist/Consultant for the IMB in Northern Africa and the Middle East. The Hicks have lived in Israel, the West Bank, and Jordan. Ray received a Doctorate of Ministry in marriage and family from Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He holds a Master's of Divinity with an emphasis in pastoral care from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. Ray and Beverly have been married for 31 years and have three children. Sommer and Melakee are their daughters, and Micah is their son. Email: memcare@netzero.net.*

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