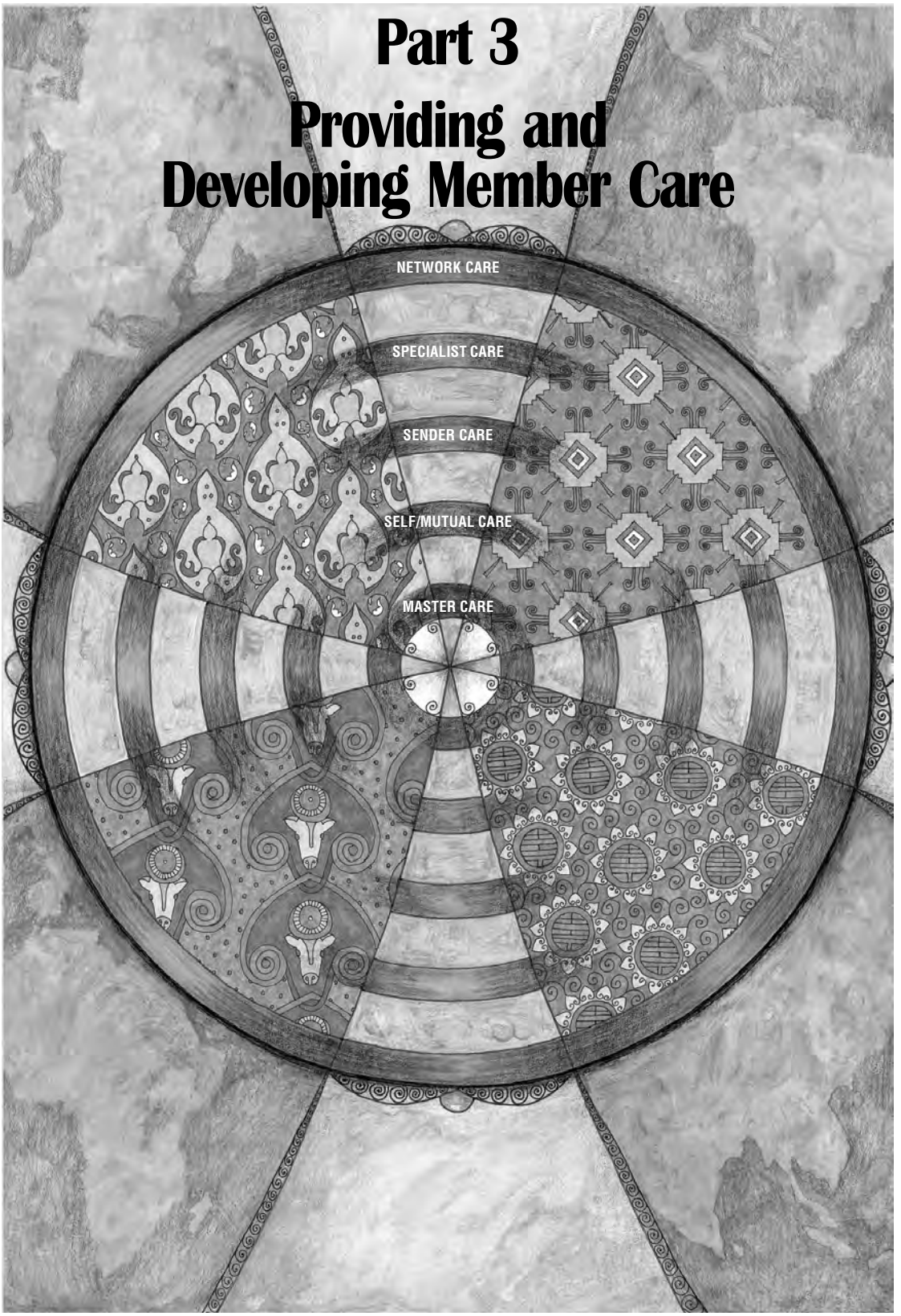
Part 3

Providing and Developing Member Care



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Jesus Christ: The Heart Of Member Care

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While here on earth, Jesus' effectiveness in ministry stemmed from the loving support given Him by God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. In turn, Jesus gave equally effective support to His disciples. He forged deep and loving relationships with each of them, modeled an alternative lifestyle to them, and showed them how life on earth can and must revolve around His Father. Jesus, the Master Carer, has much to teach member care workers and mission partners.

"What are you two intending to do with the rest of your lives?" That's the question a retired missionary put to us when we stood at one of life's crossroads in the early 1990s. For 19 years we had pastored a thriving church in England. Sensing that God was calling us out of that ministry, we handed over the leadership to others, then took sabbatical leave on the island of Cyprus—to rest, reflect, and contemplate the question, "What next?" The missionary's question, therefore, was timely.

We had been looking after a study center for missionaries for six weeks when this question was put to us. Set in a beautiful village on the island, this center provided mission partners with a place where they could come to study a variety of subjects. There was a well-stocked library with shelves packed with Bible commentaries, books on mission-related topics, books on relationships, and so on. There were teaching tapes, too, which mission partners could listen to and learn from. The missionary who was asking us about our future was aware of the work we had been doing at the center. "I feel that God might be calling you to work overseas long-term," she said. "Would you mind if I wrote to the International Director of my mission and told him about you?"

Responding to this question changed the course of our lives. A year later, we returned to Cyprus to begin an entirely new ministry. Aware that most mission partners are too tired to take time out to study, for six years we provided a place where, instead of working for examinations, they could respond to Jesus' invitation to "come with Me by yourselves to a quiet place and take some rest" (Mark 6:31). Although we have now returned to England, we continue this member care ministry in our home. "The Hiding

Place," as it is called, is a place to which mission partners delight to come: to reflect on the months or years they have been working overseas, to prepare prayerfully to go overseas for the first time, or simply to enjoy the quietness and the beauty of a place where they can meet with God without being disturbed.

Over the years, as we have been listening to such people, we have attempted to understand and apply Jesus' approach to ministry. The subject of Master care is, then, one in which we are intensely interested. By Master care, we mean the way God, having created us, puts the ongoing finishing touches to us: growing us up spiritually and emotionally, loving us, giving us the grace to love Him in return, and giving us the grace, too, to love His people and His ministry. In particular, we place the spotlight in this paper on the way Jesus trained, mentored, equipped, supported, and loved the Twelve, and we seek to relate this ministry to the ministry of mission partners and member care workers.

Rooted in Relationships

As we have studied Jesus' ministry over the years, the conviction has deepened that Master care is rooted in establishing, developing, and maintaining relationships—first the relationship between God and the caregiver and then between the caregiver and the partner being cared for. We say this because, before Jesus began His public ministry, He enjoyed a deep relationship with His Father and with the Holy Spirit. He also formed close relationships with a dozen key people, the Twelve. Indeed, one of the moving things about the method of earthly ministry Jesus models is that He called His disciples to be *with* Him before He asked them to do anything *for* Him (Mark 3:14).

We have a beautiful example of Jesus' relationships in the first chapter of John's Gospel: "The next day John was back at his post with two disciples, who were watching. He looked up, saw Jesus walking nearby, and said, 'Here he is, God's Passover Lamb.' The two disciples heard him and went after Jesus. Jesus looked over his shoulder and said to them, 'What are you after?' They said, 'Rabbi, (which means "Teacher"), where are you staying?' He replied, 'Come along and see for yourself.' They came, saw where he was living, and ended up staying with him for the day" (John 1:37-38, The Message).

Notice that, instead of simply *describing* the place where He stayed, Jesus invited them to "come and see." The result of their day together was that Jesus and Andrew became firm friends. This new relationship had such power that Andrew immediately led his brother, Simon, to the Master.

The emphasis on relationships does not end there, however. After much prayer, and from the large number of disciples who were already attracted to Him, Jesus chose just 12 men. He carefully and lovingly formed community with them *before* He sent them out on any mission. A study of the Gospels shows how deeply He loved them (John 15:9), how He called them friends (John 15:15), and how they became as family to Him. They ate together, traveled together, and in all probability bathed in the Sea of Galilee together. The Twelve watched Jesus turn water into wine, heal the sick, and cast out demons. They heard Him teach, pray, admonish, and encourage. They walked together, talked together, and went fishing together. They became one with Him in the bonds of friendship. They were open with one another. This closeness grew *before* they started to work with Jesus.

Rooted in Rhythm and Rest

Soon after Jesus involved them in His mission, however, Mark paints a picture of the group being pressured by people—so much so that "because so many people were coming and going … they did not even have a chance to eat" (Mark 6:31).

Seeing and sensing what was happening, Jesus acted: "Come with Me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest"

(Mark 6:31), He insisted. He did not say *go* and take some rest. No. The invitation is to *come*: "Come with Me. Let's do it together." On another occasion, He gives them a similar invitation: "Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace" (Matt. 11:28-30, The Message).

Again, notice the language: "Come. Get away *with me*. Watch how *I* do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace." This is the language of Jesus' heart. It is the language of Master care *par excellence.*

In her book *Jesus Man of Prayer*, Sister Margaret Magdalene (1987, p. 41) reminds us, "Jesus was rarely without a crowd around Him. His own personal space was constantly invaded—not just in terms of time but in actual physical contact. Jostled and pushed by the throng (Mark 5:31), forced to preach from a borrowed boat in order to distance Himself a little from the growing crowd on the shore (Matt. 13:2), the picture builds up of someone under incessant pressure. His compassion for the crowds meant that mothers came crashing in with their children." Jesus' need for space, then, was urgent, and He did not hesitate to make sure He had such space, even though at times this caused Him to close His ears to cries for help and to turn away from people (Matt. 5:1; Mark 1:37).

Life offers us many similar choices. In saying no to being driven and becoming too busy, Jesus was saying yes to relationships—first to His relationship with the Father and the Spirit and secondly to His relationship with His disciples. His life was rather like the ebb and flow of the sea or the rising and setting of the sun. For Him, there was a season for everything: aloneness and togetherness, busyness and rest, fruitfulness and fallowness, quality time with His Father and quality time with the disciples, with whom Jesus forged warm, loving, lasting relationships.

Rooted in a Realistic Lifestyle

The Master provided care for His disciples in three main ways: by example, through teaching, and through mentoring. In this section, we examine each of these types of care in turn.

Jesus' Example

He refuses the "tyranny of the urgent"

The example Jesus sets presents a challenge to those of us who find ourselves overwhelmed by work, overstimulated by people and ideas, living cross-culturally, and traveling often and far. Mark sums up the situation well when he recalls how, very early one morning, Jesus escaped to the hills to pray. The previous day had been hectic. Jesus had preached in the synagogue in Capernaum, healed Peter's mother-in-law, and then ministered to countless other needy people who begged for His help. Although He had gone away to meet His Father in prayer, the disciples searched Him out. "Everyone is searching for you," they said (Mark 1:37). If they were imagining that Jesus would stop His prayer time because of the needs of the crowd, they were mistaken. Jesus says, quietly but firmly, "Let's go somewhere else." They went to another part of Galilee to continue the work of evangelism, but between Capernaum where the conversation took place and the other villages lay miles of open countryside. The walk not only gave them time and space to reflect, rest, have their energy restored, and renew their relationship with God, but also gave them some much-needed time together.

Commenting on Jesus' attitude, Sister Margaret Magdalene (1987, pp. 41-42) writes: "He refused to submit to the tyranny of the urgent. He would not let the crowds or even human need dictate the priorities. He had an inner freedom to say 'No.' He could say 'No' with integrity because in His times with His Father, He

clearly discerned and adopted the Father's priorities and perspectives. Not in bondage to the need to achieve, nor neurotic about the success of His mission, nor puffed up by popularity, He is free."

He ensures that output is matched by input

Jesus modeled the need to live a balanced life for the sake of our soul and our relationships. Someone has summed up this need with this piece of advice:

input=output=input=output

In other words, if we are to give out to others effectively, we must make sure that we take in as much as we give out. Output for member care workers might mean traveling to visit mission partners, relating to them, loving them, listening to their worries or pain or struggles, feeling inadequate for the task of being involved in member care, and not knowing where to turn for help. Output for mission partners might include stressful activities such as language study; adapting to a new climate, diet, and culture; coping with transition; and facing the challenge of using professional skills in an unfamiliar environment and without the tools and finances that were available in the home country.

Input for both member care workers and mission partners might include rest days and holidays, letters or emails from home, and well-planned conferences. By well-planned conferences, we mean conferences where there are spaces between sessions, with time to make and deepen relationships, time to relax, and time to enjoy periods of personal prayer, as well as informative teaching and discussions and the opportunity to talk in depth with someone qualified to listen. Input might also come in the form of a retreat where the emphasis is on one's relationship with God and/or on personal growth, rather than on listening to talks. Above all, input comes in the still, hushed place where God's voice is most clearly heard and His love most keenly felt.

He models a ministry saturated in prayer

Jesus sets us the example, not only of a balanced life, but also of a *prayerful* life. He was praying at His baptism when the heavens opened, the Spirit descended on Him, and He received the Father's affirmation (Luke 3:21-22). He was praying on that morning we mentioned earlier when, after a hectic Sabbath, long before dawn, while it was still night, His disciples found Him in a secluded spot (Mark 1:35). He was praying right through the night after He had fed the 5,000 and insisted that His disciples get into the boat and go on ahead (Mark 6:45-46).

Jesus' disciples would have been men of prayer long before their Master came on the scene. They had a prayer place—the synagogue. They had a hymnbook—the Psalms. They listened to the Old Testament being read and learned passages of it by heart. They also said prayers each morning on waking and each evening before sleeping. Certain "blessings" were also part of their vocabulary—like this early morning wake-up call: "This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it." They kept the Sabbath too. The God to whom they prayed, though, was distant, demanding, and too holy for them to come near. In fact, the name of God was considered too holy to pass a person's lips.

When Jesus came into their lives, by His own example, He taught them a new way of praying. Here was a man who obviously felt secure in the Father's love. This influenced the *way* He prayed. Intimacy, warmth, delight, and spontaneity are words that best describe His own conversations with the Father. Perhaps it is not surprising, then, that those who lived alongside Him begged Him, "Lord, teach *us* to pray" (Luke 11:1).

Did His very first suggestion surprise them? "When you pray," He suggested, "say *Abba*—daddy" (Luke 11:2). Since the Old Testament speaks often of God as Father, the Twelve would have been familiar

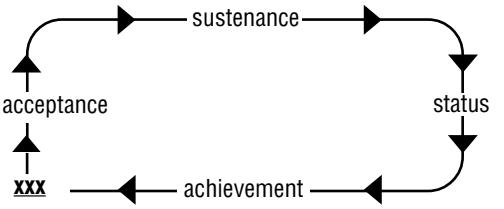
with the *picture* of God as Father (see Ps. 103:13; Isa. 63:16; 64:8; Hos. 11:1-4). It would never have occurred to Jesus' disciples to *call* God "Father," however. As Professor Joachim Jeremias (1967) reminds us, there is not a single example of the use of "Abba" as an address to God in the whole of Jewish literature.

We are not told whether or not the disciples acted on Jesus' advice in the early days of their School of Prayer. What we are told is that Jesus tried to make sure that the disciples' image of God was accurate. His main method, in true Middle Eastern style, was to speak to their hearts by telling them stories. Take the three unforgettable stories in Luke 15, for example. Here Jesus shows that God is like a Middle Eastern shepherd who discovers that one of his sheep is lost. He searches everywhere until the sheep is safely in his arms and on its way back to the fold. When it has arrived home, the shepherd throws a party to celebrate.

God is not only like a man. Jesus also compares Him to a Middle Eastern housewife who sweeps and sweeps the floor of her home and refuses to rest until her precious coin has been found. Most moving of all, Jesus likens God to a Middle Eastern father whose two sons both wish he would drop dead. Even though they treat their father cruelly, the father offers them nothing but love.

Love is what God is. Goodness is what God is. Compassion is what God is. This is the message that Jesus wanted His disciples to believe. He wanted them to know that each of them was personally loved by His Father. Little by little, His friends accepted the good news. Brennan Manning (1994, p. 16), in *Abba's Child*, reminds us what a huge step forward this was: "It takes a profound conversion to accept that God is relentlessly tender and compassionate toward us just as we are—not in spite of our sins and faults—but with them."

Jesus not only assured His disciples that they were loved by a compassionate, tender God, He also taught them the transforming power of God's love. He did this by allowing them to see how these truths gave *Him* the power to fulfill His God-given calling, even when the way was hard. To explain what we mean, we use an adaptation of a tool the British psychiatrist Frank Lake (1966, p. 205) developed, The Dynamic Cycle of Being and Well-Being:



The Dynamic Cycle of Being and Well-Being

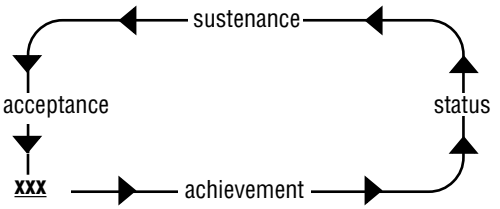
Lake used this diagram to illustrate two truths: first, to demonstrate the sense of well-being that is given to a child who experiences its mother's love and, second, to show how Jesus' sense of well-being found its roots in His Father's felt love.

Regarding the first truth, Lake reminds us how a good mother gives her child acceptance. Then, as she feeds the child, not only with milk but also with warmth and love, the child's sense of belonging in this world expands. Acceptance, welcome, and sustenance provide the child with a sense of belonging and status—so much so that it is ready to learn the achievement of relating to and giving love to others.

Jesus' relationship with His Father was not unlike the relationship a child enjoys with a good mother. While He was here on earth, He frequently retreated into His Father's presence—particularly when He was in any kind of pain, such as the bereavement He must have felt so keenly after the murder of his cousin, John the Baptist. In the silence, He poured His pain into the lap of His Father. The Father, in turn, gave Him acceptance—not in spite of the pain but *with* the grief. Jesus found Himself not only accepted, but also supported and sustained. The intimacy that bound Him to His Father reassured Him of His status. His Father had spelled this out at His baptism: "You are My Son, whom I love; with You I am well pleased"(Mark

1:11). From the fullness of acceptance, sustenance, and the status of being a beloved child, Jesus was able to return to continue the work the Father had sent Him to do: to continue to pour out redeeming love and compassion to others.

In contrast, we are reminded of an occasion when we traveled overseas to lead a prayer retreat for a group of mission partners. After the retreat, one of the partners admitted, "I love God and really want to serve Him, but I've never quite grasped that God loves *me*." Many other mission partners would echo this admission. The problem with this lack of assurance that we are loved is that we are tempted to move around the dynamic cycle in the opposite direction from Jesus:



Round the Cycle
In the Opposite Direction From Jesus

Some of us who want to achieve great things for God seem to believe that our achievement brings us status. We believe that we are accepted because of what we do. We are sustained by these false ideas. We therefore try to achieve more and more to earn more and more favor with God—only to collapse from exhaustion or to suffer from burnout. "No," whispers Jesus. "The secret of fruitfulness is not work, work, work. The secret of fruitfulness is intimacy with me." "Live in me. Make your home in me, just as I do in you. In the same way that a branch can't bear grapes by itself but only by being joined to the vine, you can't bear fruit unless you are joined with me. I am the Vine, you are the branches. When you're joined with me and I with you, the relation intimate and organic, the harvest is sure to be abundant. Separated, you can't produce a thing" (John 15:4-5, The Message).

One of the saddest things that we have felt since we have been attempting to provide member care for mission partners is the reaction we frequently receive when teaching the ideas we have outlined above: "I couldn't possibly pray like this," some object. "Just look at the length of my prayer list. Life is just too busy for this kind of commitment." On the other hand, one of the greatest joys and privileges that comes our way is when someone comes to The Hiding Place and says, "I've heard about intimacy with Jesus. I've read about it. Now show me how I can experience it!"

Jesus assures us that we *can* experience such closeness anywhere and everywhere. One of the things that is so refreshing about His own relationship with the Father and the Spirit is that it grew, not only in solitude and silence, but also in the busyness of life. When Jesus was about to feed the 5,000 with five small fish and two little loaves, it was natural for Him to ask His Father to bless the meal. When He was in the Garden of Gethsemane, it was natural for Him to cry out to the Father. When He was walking in the countryside, it was natural for Him to invite His disciples to "look at the birds … they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your Father feeds them.… See how the lilies of the field grow" (Matt. 6:26, 28).

The 17th century French monk, Brother Lawrence, called this kind of prayer "practicing the presence of God." When asked *how* we pray in this way, he said, among other things, that we should "settle ourselves firmly in God's presence by constantly talking to Him" and that we should ask for God's grace to sense His presence at odd moments of the day, reminding ourselves frequently that God loves us (Blaiklock, 1981, pp. 11-12).

Not long ago, a mission partner came to The Hiding Place for a prayer retreat. She shared many joys and sorrows. Among the sorrows was the cry that "our mission prayer meetings are so *boring*!" We understood. We have been to too many mission

prayer meetings that are boring, because they start in the wrong place—with the task and not with the Master. Prayer meetings that begin with Jesus, meet with Jesus, listen to Jesus, and from that starting line focus on needy, hurting, helpless people can surely never be boring. They may be painful, because often the only prayer we can pray is one of silent grief. For those who learn to pray in the way Jesus taught, prayer meetings may be painful, even powerful, but never boring!

Jesus' Teaching

He taught the disciples before and after ministry trips

Having carefully laid the spiritual foundations and having allowed His disciples to watch Him at work and at prayer, *then* and only then Jesus sends His team out on a mission. He sends them out, not one by one, but in pairs. He sends them out with careful instructions about what to do and what not to do; what to take and what not to take; and, as far as is possible before a mission venture of this kind, He prepares them for difficulties that they might encounter. Luke paints the picture of this proactive preparation beautifully (Luke 9:1-6).

Imagine the scene. For months, these men have listened to Jesus teach and preach. They have watched Him perform miracles. Now they listen to His instructions as He prepares to send *them* into the villages to prepare people for the day when He Himself will come.

They were to preach, to heal, to cleanse, to exorcise, to trust, to bless, and to be aware of their vulnerability. They were to exercise caution and wisdom, to listen, to be prepared for difficulties, and to be like their teacher. Jesus empowered them for the task, gave them authority, and personally commissioned them. He also gave them careful instructions concerning their luggage and accommodation. They were to travel light, live simply, and be content with what they were offered. On the other hand, they were to be shrewd and, where necessary, to exercise the ministry of shaking the dust from their feet in places where they were not welcome. Mark sums up the mission in this way: "They preached with joyful urgency that life can be radically different; right and left they sent demons packing; they brought wellness to the sick, anointing their bodies and healing their spirits" (Mark 6:12-13, The Message).

They then return to Jesus. He had obviously been praying for them while they were away. As soon as they return, we see them gathering around Him, telling Him story after story. We also see Him listening to them and responding with affirmation and rejoicing. He is intimately involved in all that they have been experiencing, enjoying, and achieving. Equally, He is concerned for their welfare, so He does not just listen to them, then immediately send them out on another mission. Instead, as He hears them, He senses their need and insists that they take a break. In other words, Master care provides compassion, opportunities for ministry, passionate prayer support, vision, listening, empowering, care, and rest.

He underlined their need for mutual support

Notice that Jesus did not send His disciples out alone. He sent them out in pairs. Was this because the Old Testament stresses that "it is not good for man[kind] to be alone" (Gen. 2:18) and that the alien, the stranger, the widow, and the orphan should be protected, cared for, and placed in families? Or was it because He Himself suffered from loneliness, even though He had done everything possible to make sure that He was surrounded by those who loved Him? We are not told. What we now understand, though, is the effect that loneliness can have on people and their relationships. Ronald Rolheiser (1979), in his book *The Restless Heart*, puts it powerfully when he explains that loneliness, if not understood, can be destructive of human intimacy, can result in being overpossessive in relationships, and can pre-

vent us from entering into any kind of creative solitude. If not faced and grappled with, loneliness can lead us to become hardened and desensitized persons. Jesus seems here to be attempting to safeguard His disciples from such subtle pressures.

He gave them a sense of vision

Jesus not only safeguarded His disciples from the scourge of loneliness by providing them with companionship and support, but also gave them a sense of vision and privilege. As He prepares to send them out, Jesus sounds like someone full of passion and vision who is inspiring His companions to share His passion and ensure that His vision is realized. He is like a teacher sending fully equipped students out into the world—or a king sending carefully schooled and *inspired* ambassadors to carry out His orders and to speak for Him. This way of preparing His team must surely have given them a sense of privilege and worth, of value and honor. They were, indeed, ambassadors *for Christ*, and they were understanding this more and more. Jesus not only commissioned and inspired them, but also empowered them. Did He breathe on them in the way He did in the Upper Room on the first Easter Sunday? We are not told. What we are told is that He did not give them a list of instructions and expect them to follow them in their own strength. He knew all too well that, if they were to achieve anything for Him, it would be by grace. The necessary grace was His free gift to them—grace for them as individuals *and* grace for them as a group.

Jesus' Mentoring

Jesus didn't just teach those who lived in community with Him. He discipled them as well. By discipling, we mean teaching through personal encounter and close relationship. Jesus did this in a variety of ways.

He showed them His glory

One way was to give the disciples the privilege of seeing His glory. So far as we are aware, the first time He revealed His glory to them was early in His earthly ministry, when He and His disciples attended the wedding at Cana. John remembers how Jesus turned gallons of water into wine and how this revelation of His glory persuaded the disciples to "put their faith in Him" (John 2:11).

He assisted them in their ministry

Another way in which Jesus discipled those whom He had called was to stay alongside them and support them while they helped Him with *His* ministry. Think, for example, of the occasion we referred to earlier, when 5,000 men plus women and children were sitting on the grassy banks that slope down to the Sea of Galilee: "'We're out in the country and it's getting late,' the disciples warned Jesus. 'Dismiss the people so they can go to the villages and get some supper.' But Jesus said, 'There is no need to dismiss them. *You* give them supper.' 'All we have are five loaves of bread and two fish,' they protested. Jesus said, 'Bring them here.'… He took the five loaves and two fish, lifted His face to heaven in prayer, blessed, broke, and *gave the bread to the disciples*. The disciples then gave the food to the congregation" (Matt. 14:13-19, The Message; emphasis added).

It is almost certain that the bread and the fish were multiplied *as the disciples gave them to the crowd.* If this is indeed what happened, imagine the impact that the nature and size of this miracle must have had on Jesus' friends. Jesus could have chosen to meet the needs of the crowd in a variety of ways. He chose to disciple His team by giving them the privilege of helping Him.

He showed them how He healed the sick

On other occasions, too, Jesus gave His disciples the privilege of watching Him heal the sick and raise the dead. He also allowed them to listen to His compassion, that is, the way He hurt in the very depths of His being for the poor. Is it any wonder, then, that in Acts 3 we find Peter making his way to the temple at the time of prayer? When he meets a crippled beggar, instead of responding to the beggar's plea for money, he responds in the way the Master would have responded had He been there in person: "Silver and gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk" (Acts 3:6).

He exposed them to His revolutionary views

While traveling with Jesus, the disciples were given the thrill of hearing His teaching on a variety of subjects: fasting, love for enemies, judging others, forgiveness, and the suffering and death He must go through. They heard Him spell out the meaning of the Beatitudes, and they were present when He gave the listening crowd a revolutionary way of ordering their priorities. Quoting Genesis 2:24, "A man will leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife, and they will become one flesh," Jesus addresses a culture that, even today, believes that men are of much greater value than women and that women are the property of their husbands in the same way that the house or the vineyard is the husband's property. Instead of agreeing with these ideas, Jesus challenges them. A wife is not a piece of property. She is a *person* loved by God. Because it is all too easy to sweep this particular piece of Jesus' teaching under the carpet and because this can cause endless damage to marriage and families, there is an urgent need in member care to tease out the implications of such practical teaching.

Marriage as God planned it, Jesus seems to insist, means that the top priority in life for a husband and wife, after their relationship with God, is that they should cleave to one another. One way of cleaving to one another is to spend quality time with each other in times of joy and to support one another in times of change or difficulty. Although an individual's relationship with God must take priority over all other relationships, married people must be given space in which to make sure that their relationship *with one another* also deepens and that they become one spiritually, emotionally, and sexually. They must therefore "leave" not only father and mother, but also many other demands to ensure that this space is always in place. The third priority for married couples—after God and the marriage relationship—is children, if God entrusts them with this precious gift. When these three priorities are safely in place, husbands and wives are then free to explore other ways of serving God and using the gifts God has given them. Sadly, many Christians—particularly mission partners and other Christian leaders—make their service for God a higher priority than their family. The family unit is then endangered and suffers unnecessarily in a way that is dishonoring to God.

For single people, too, their first priority is their relationship with God. Next, if they model themselves on the single Jesus, the priority is *not* work, work, work, but rather it is to create close relationships with friends. As Carmen Caltagirone (1983, pp. xi, 5) reminds us in *Friendship as Sacrament*, "We can look at some of our deepest relationships and find there a clue to the unfathomable love of God.... The love we share in human relationships is part of the grandness of a God who cradles us tenderly in his all-loving embrace."

He gave them privileged insights

As well as teaching His disciples while they were walking with Him or listening to Him address the crowds, Jesus frequently took them aside and gave them

deep and concentrated insights that He had not shared outside of their community. Think of the time when He first told the parable of the sower, for example. He left the masses to work out the symbolism for themselves, but when He was alone with the disciples, He allowed them to ask questions. "Why do you tell stories?" they ask. "To create readiness," He replies, and He adds, "To nudge the people toward receptive insight" (Matt. 13:13, The Message). He then goes on to explain in detail the hidden meanings of this His first parable.

He prepared them for a painful transition

Most memorably of all, we recall those last few hours of Jesus' life, when, once again, we see Him engaging in proactive preparation of His disciples. He knew that they would find the transition of His death and resurrection difficult to cope with. "Love one another as I have loved you" (John 13:34), He earnestly said, underlining once again the need to serve others from the base of good relationships. During this long session with this team that was soon to take over the ministry from Him, Jesus emphasized the need to trust. "Trust in God; trust also in Me," He begged them (John 14:1). He went on to remind them where their resources were to come from. Be open to the Holy Spirit's ministry, He pleaded, knowing full well how much He personally owed to His relationship with and support from the third person of the Trinity. "He will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.... He will testify about Me" (John 14:26; 15:26).

As well as teaching His disciples as a group, Jesus frequently addressed *crowds* of people. These Middle Eastern crowds would have consisted of individuals, couples, and whole families. Jesus gave them unforgettable, life-changing lessons in relationships and in personal and spiritual growth. From time to time, too, we see Jesus *drawing alongside* individuals and families, close friends, and couples. On the first Easter Day, for instance, He walked along the road from Jerusalem to Emmaus. On this journey, He came across two of His disciples, whom many believe to have been a married couple. After listening to their bewilderment, He gave them a thrilling account of the Jewish Scripture's teaching about Himself. Their hearts burned within them, the scales fell from their eyes, and they could scarcely bear to be parted from Him. Or again, one week later, we watch Him cooking breakfast on the beach for His bewildered disciples. After breakfast, He comes alongside Peter, the disciple who had publicly denied Him three times. The memory of the way he had failed the Master must still have been plunging Peter into despair. No condemnation comes from Jesus, however, only love and understanding, restoration, and recommissioning with all that that entailed in terms of trust. Jesus is entrusting people to Peter. He is also showing confidence that Peter will, in fact, love Him to the point of death.

If we are to follow faithfully in the footsteps of the Master Carer, we in member care will take note of Jesus' attention to detail, as well as His concern for the welfare of *individuals* (including *couples, close friends*, and *families*). We will ensure that, as well as arranging occasions when mission partners are taught in traditional Western ways—through talks and lectures and seminars and conferences—we will provide opportunity for partners to be listened to *one-to-one*, to be cared for, to be understood, and to be healed of hurts.

A Ministry Full of Mystery

The Stature of Waiting

Some of the most powerful teaching Jesus gave was lived rather than talked about. We think, for example, of the manner in which He modeled the "stature of waiting" (Vanstone, 1982). Over and over again, we find Jesus refusing to rush into ministry but rather waiting for the right moment to act. So He leaves the wonder

of His Father's presence and waits in a woman's womb. For 30 years, He is content to live and learn and love, first in Egypt, then in the obscurity of Nazareth. Even when He does make His first public appearance, He insists that John the Baptist should baptize Him, and He is prepared to wait a while longer. The crowd is eager to hear, thirsting to meet their Messiah, but Jesus knows that the really *ready* moment is the right moment. So, instead of preaching or teaching or healing, He follows the Spirit's prompting and goes on a prolonged retreat in the desert. Author Sue Monk Kidd (1990, p. 14) reminds us that Jesus' earthly ministry was punctuated by such retreats: "When important times of transition came for Jesus, He entered enclosures of waiting—the wilderness, a garden, the tomb. Jesus' life was a balanced rhythm of waiting on God and expressing the fruits of waiting. There are reasons why Jesus was prepared to wait. He recognized that when you're waiting, you're *not* doing nothing. You're doing the most important something there is.... If you can't be still and wait, you can't become what God created you to be."

Mission partners, too, are frequently asked to wait. We wait for visas, we wait to learn the language, we wait to make relationships with members of our team and with our neighbors in the country to which we have been called. We wait for news from home, we wait to discover some of the reasons that God has called us to work overseas. Such waiting can seem endless. Many mission partners have not yet learned that the deep things of God do not come quickly. They are revealed in the fullness of time—God's time, not ours. Unless mission partners have grasped the value and "the stature of waiting" that the Master models, waiting may seem irksome, futile, and a waste of time and talent. It may trigger feelings of failure or a lack of self-worth. Our task in member care may therefore be to point 21st century partners programmed by secular thinking to the strange success story of the Waiting One—the Master Carer who is our model in mission and who is one in a long line of those who have discovered the rich rewards of waiting.

The Power of Powerlessness

Jesus not only endured and grew through endless waiting, He also demonstrated the power of powerlessness. We see this peculiar power at work in the Garden of Gethsemane. Having poured out His pain and dread to His Father, Jesus hands over the reins of His life to His captors. From this point on, He who had healed the sick, preached so powerfully, and master-minded the Last Supper organizes nothing. He goes where His captors lead Him. Yet John, His closest friend, helps us to see how powerful His powerlessness is. "Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to Him, went out [to His captors] and asked them, 'Who is it you want?' 'Jesus of Nazareth,' they replied. 'I am He,' Jesus said.... When Jesus said, 'I am He,' *they drew back and fell to the ground*" (John 18:4-6, emphasis added).

Why did they fall to the ground? John provides no answer to this question. Do we find a clue, though, in what happened the following day? As Jesus hung on the cross, the penitent thief begged Him, "Jesus, remember me when you come into Your kingdom" (Luke 23:42). A little later, after Jesus had breathed His last breath, the centurion standing at the foot of the cross cried out, "Surely He was the Son of God!" (Matt. 27:54). Just as the centurion and the penitent thief saw beyond the bruised and broken body of Jesus to His glory, did His captors in the Garden similarly see His divinity shine through His human form in all its powerlessness? Possibly. Why else would they fall to the ground?

In the hours that follow, Jesus is insulted, flogged, spat upon, criticized, and crucified. But note carefully: The miracle is that He achieved more in those hours of utter powerlessness than He achieved in His three years of astonishing ministry. In these hours, He won the salvation of the world. This is Master care in action.

Many mission partners also experience powerlessness. Take the experience of being de-skilled, for example. Workers may be well qualified in their chosen profession and have proved that, in their own country, they can make good use of their qualifications. When they work overseas, though, there may be many reasons why some or all of those skills cannot be used. These individuals might then experience not just powerlessness but frustration and a creeping feeling of failure. Our role as member care workers will then involve more than identification with the frustration and feelings of the partner. We will need to unfold the mystery of a Master who has also been in this situation and is able to understand, to support, and to bring forth much fruit from this seeming powerlessness.

The Value of the Desert

We have already seen that one of the places where Jesus exercised "the stature of waiting" was in the Judean desert. It would appear that, at first, He was reluctant to go there. We say this because in his Gospel Mark uses the powerful Greek word *ekballo* ("to thrust"), when he tells us how Jesus was driven into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit.

Jesus had publicly identified Himself with John the Baptist. He had witnessed the crowds waiting to hear God's new message. He was poised to begin His public ministry. The Spirit recognizes, though, that before people act, they need space to listen—to their own hearts, to God, and even to the tempting voice of the evil one.

Jesus tuned in to the voice of God before He entered the awesome arena of the desert. The Father's message, "You are My Son, whom I love; with You I am well pleased" (Mark 1:11), must have been the food that sustained Him through His long and lonely fast. The message was particularly powerful coming at this moment in time. It reminded Jesus that, since His public ministry had not yet begun, He was loved, not for anything He had done but simply for who He was. When a person absorbs that kind of love, it elicits a response of love. In the desert, then, we hear Jesus spell out His life's motto: "*I have come to do your will, O God*." This motto must surely have been part of the armor that He wore when He engaged in spiritual warfare against the enemy.

Almost certainly, some of the questions that Jesus was thinking through as He entered the desert included, "How am I going to carry out the task My Father has given Me to do?" "How am I going to reveal the kingdom to the waiting, watching world?" Satan was quick to make persuasive suggestions: "Make yourself popular; accumulate possessions; exercise power." "Get behind Me, Satan!" With that uncompromising rebuke, Jesus rejected each of these proposals. He chose, instead, to fulfill His Father's mission in His Father's way, with the help of the Holy Spirit. He thus emerges from the howling wilderness equipped and empowered to return to the clamoring crowd and to serve the Father with authority.

Jesus was not the only one to be refined in the desert. All of the giants and giantesses of our faith were wooed into the desert by God: Abraham and Sarah, Moses and Miriam, Elijah, the Psalmists, Paul, and so on.

Mission partners may never be required to sweat it out in a physical desert, but as part of the maturing process they will almost certainly find themselves in an inner desert from time to time. The inner desert refers to any period of our life when the landscape of our heart is like the bleakness and barrenness of the actual desert. We may feel this barrenness when all of our natural, human resources have dried up or when we seem to have been tested almost beyond our ability to cope. It might be an inner place where we experience a huge emotional emptiness or loneliness or where our soul seems as dry as soil that cries out for water. It might be a feeling of helplessness, hopelessness, or fear. It might also be a feeling of wonder or awe—a place where we meet with God in a special way.

In Hannah Hurnard's (1966) delightful story *Hinds' Feet on High Places*, the heroine, Much-Afraid, is seen serving the Chief Shepherd. Content though she is in many ways, she is nonetheless conscious that the picture of the Chief Shepherd that others gain through her is spoiled for a variety of reasons. She is a cripple, for one thing, and she has a twisted mouth. The Chief Shepherd comes for her and takes her on a long, healing journey to the "high places"—a journey that is rather like the inner journey we all have to make. At first, Much-Afraid is excited. Her excitement turns to dismay, though, when the Chief Shepherd warns her, "All My servants on their way to the High Places have had to make [a] detour through this desert.... Here they have learnt many things which otherwise they would have known nothing about" (p. 55).

Master care—the methods God uses to ensure that those who serve Him grow spiritually and emotionally—*includes* leading His loved ones into the desert. As God said to Hosea concerning Hosea's wife, Gomer, "I am now going to allure her; I will lead her into the desert and speak tenderly to her. There I will give her back her vineyards.... There she will sing as in the days of her youth"(Hos. 2:14-15).

As member care workers and mission partners, it is our responsibility to study and grasp the meaning of the mysteries that Jesus fleshed out for us. Only then will we be able to support partners who are being required by God to learn the stature of waiting, the power of powerlessness, or the value of the desert. One way to do this is to pause, ponder, and respond to questions like the ones that follow.

- Can you think of occasions when God has asked you to wait? How did you feel? What can you learn from the way Jesus was prepared to wait? How does this help you in your work in member care—and in your own life?
- Can you remember times when you felt powerless? Looking back, how do you think God used that time to help others and to teach you? How do you feel you can best support mission partners who are feeling helpless at the moment?
- Jesus' life motto became very clear for Him while He was in the desert. What is your life motto?

Now that we have paused to ponder the mysteries Jesus modeled to us, we urge you turn to the following questions from time to time to think through the vital subject of Master care for yourself.

Reflection and Discussion

1. Reread the opening pages of this chapter, focusing on Jesus and His relationship with the Twelve. If you are the leader of a team, would people observing your group recognize that you are making Master care your model? Would it be obvious to them that you are more concerned about people than projects? Ask yourself, "How can I get to know the mission partners who are under my care?"

2. Do *you* have the courage to be like Jesus—to look for resources for yourself *before* you minister to others and after you have served them? If not, why not?

3. If you could work out a rhythm for yourself that balanced busyness with stillness, what might that rhythm look like in terms of time spent alone with God (daily, weekly, monthly, annually) and time spent serving Him?

4. Jesus gave His disciples a new understanding of prayer. As you think about the prayer patterns of Jesus, do you think your own prayer life needs to be changed in any way? If so, how might you go about making it more effective?

5. Look carefully at Jesus' priorities. Compare these with your own lifestyle, and ask yourself whether there are any changes that need to be made. How does your response relate to the way you are moving on the Dynamic Cycle of Being and Well-Being?

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Joy and Sacrifice In the Lord

AJITH FERNANDO

Joy and suffering are intertwining threads that run through the course of our life. Both are indispensable for our growth, for our missions work, and for our relationship with Christ.

In today's world, happiness is almost considered a basic human right by many people, and it is often defined in a way that precludes suffering. This attitude has influenced the church also, and I fear that the way we train people for the ministry does not adequately prepare them for the suffering that accompanies Christian ministry. I will try to respond to this problem below. This chapter is an expanded form of something I wrote in response to the concern that some of my prayer partners expressed recently, when they knew that I was suffering from fairly severe exhaustion. This accounts for the many autobiographical sections in the article.

Commitment to Joy and to the Cross

I suppose you could call me a "Christian hedonist." I do not like this phrase, which was popularized by John Piper (1986), but it correctly describes my desire. I am a pleasure seeker, seeking the joy of the Lord as an extremely important experience in life. I resonate with George Müller, who said that the first and primary business that he ought to attend to every day was to have his soul happy in the Lord.

However, I want to have this joy coming out of a lifestyle of taking up the cross. Jesus said that He wants us to have His joy so that our joy may be complete (John 15:11). But soon after that, He commanded us to love each other, as He has loved us (v. 12). He then said, "Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends" (v. 13). So Christ is telling us that we must die for each other. But first there must be joy. Then the joy will issue in

sacrificial service. Elsewhere, Jesus said that, unlike the hired hand, He would die for the sheep (John 10:11-15). If we are sent into the world as the Father has sent Jesus (John 20:21), then we too must die for the sheep God entrusts to us. Recently I did a careful study on Jesus as our missionary model. I made the startling discovery that when Jesus is presented as a model for Christians, most often it is as a model of suffering (John 15:12-13; Heb. 12:2; 13:12-13; 1 Pet. 2:19-24; 4:1-2, etc.).

So on the one hand, I want to pursue the joy of the Lord, and on the other hand, I also want to pursue death for the sake of the people to whom I am called to minister. Over the past few years, I have been attempting to grapple with this paradox. How can we have joy while we are dying for a cause?

Paul's life and ministry have influenced me greatly in this process. In Philippians, Paul states that the joy of the Lord is an imperative for Christians (Phil. 4:4). He wrote this while suffering in a prison. In fact, when he urged the Philippians to complete his joy by restoring unity there, he implied that he had lost his joy over their lack of unity (Phil. 2:2; cf. 4:2). He allowed himself to be hurt by and to lose a certain earthly joy over the sins of others, while he preserved his joy in the Lord. He tells the wayward Galatians that he goes through the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in them (Gal. 4:19). He says that he faces "the daily pressure of [his] concern for all the churches." "Who is weak," he asks, "and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn?" (2 Cor. 11:28-29). He says, "Death is at work in us, but life is at work in you.... Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day" (2 Cor. 4:12, 16). How alien these verses are to modern ministry aspirations! Today we study much more about how to avoid stress than about how to take on the type of stress that Paul is talking about here.

I feel we should do everything required for a balanced life—get adequate sleep, observe the Sabbath principle, and have times set apart for the family, for study, for exercise, and for fun. Most importantly, we must spend unhurried times with the Lord in prayer and in the Word. But while we do all these things, we must also die for those we serve. And because we are called to die, there will be struggles and strains, burdens and persecutions.

Several years ago, in a Youth for Christ (YFC) training session, I shared how I struggled with a huge burden over the weaknesses and sins of the staff workers I lead. The teachers, who were from the West, were alarmed by this confession and prayed that I would be liberated from these burdens. I have thought much about that incident, especially because those teachers were fine Christians and insightful teachers. I have come to the conclusion that it is right for me to be burdened in this way. This stress that comes from concern is a part of my dying for my people. Did not Jeremiah, Daniel, Ezra, and Nehemiah suffer depression over the problems of their people and weep over their sin (Jer. 9:1-2; Dan. 10:2-3; Ezra 9:3-6; Neh. 1:1–2:3)?

Each time I return home from a preaching assignment abroad, I experience an acute sense of frustration. I have come to recognize that this is the frustration of making the transition from being a speaker to being a leader. As a speaker, I am treated like a VIP. Much is done to make me comfortable, especially when I travel to the West. But as a biblical leader, my lifestyle should be that of a servant (Mark 10:42-45). I am (perhaps I should say, "I should be") a servant of my family and of those I lead in YFC. Unfortunately, their needs do not wait for my convenience, and sometimes they crop up at the most inappropriate times.

This was what Jesus experienced too. Mark 6:31 says, "... so many people were coming and going that [Jesus and the apostles] did not even have a chance to eat." This verse goes on to record Jesus' famous statement, "Come with Me to a quiet place by yourselves and get some

rest." When we quote this statement, we often overlook the fact that Jesus and His apostles did not get the rest they desired on this occasion. In fact, Jesus went straight into teaching the crowds, who had followed Him to His supposedly quiet place. He taught the 5,000 there for a long time and then fed them. But He persevered with seeking solitude and finally found it by sending His disciples on a boat ride, while "He went up on a mountainside to pray" (Mark 6:45-46). Here Jesus demonstrates the balanced life of a servant. He served the people even when it was inconvenient, but He persevered until He found time for the other essential disciplines of life, such as the discipline of solitude.

Defining the Joy of the Lord

Perhaps at this stage I should attempt a definition of "the joy of the Lord." I believe it is an attitude toward life that emerges from reckoning certain biblical truths about our lives. I am using the verb "reckon" in the sense it is used in Romans 6:11 (KJV)—to reckon oneself dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Some newer translations render this verb, *logizomai*, as "count" (NIV) or "consider" (NRSV, NAS). To reckon is the act of accepting that certain things are true for us. Let me mention six things that we reckon about ourselves.

First, we reckon that the burden of the guilt of sin has been removed from us because we have been forgiven (Heb. 10:22). With a cleansed conscience, we can have a great sense of freedom. If God does not reckon (*logizomenos*) our sin (2 Cor. 5:19), then we do not need to either.

Second, we reckon that God has loved us so much that He has sent his Son to die for us and for our salvation (Rom. 5:8). We know that realizing that we are loved is a great trigger of joy. Since Christ's love is the greatest possible love (John 15:13), it should trigger the greatest possible joy (John 15:11).

Third, we reckon and are amazed by the fact that God has entered into an intimate relationship with us and regards us as His beloved children (1 John 3:1). People may disappoint us, but God is our never-disappointing and constant companion (Heb. 13:5-6). He is the most important person and factor in our lives (Phil. 1:21). And sometimes in our relationship with Him, we have moments close to ecstasy: "You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand" (Psalm 16:11).

Fourth, we reckon that God has invested us with significance, by making us princes and princesses in the eternal kingdom of God and by giving us a vital role in the agenda of His eternal kingdom (2 Cor. 5:20). This, of course, means that we do not need to be jealous of or feel threatened by anyone else (1 Cor. 12:14-26), thus eliminating a major cause for the loss of joy in our lives.

Fifth, we reckon that the God who loves us and who is committed to our welfare (Rom. 8:32) is also sovereign. Therefore, we know that if we are obedient to Him, in all things He will work for our good (Rom. 8:28). No circumstance or person can thwart God's good plan for our lives. God will turn even the most painful incidents into something good (Gen. 50:20). This fact gives us no adequate reason to be bitter over what anyone has done to us, thus eliminating another major cause for the loss of joy.

Sixth, we reckon that we are bound for the glorious Promised Land of heaven, for which we wait with eager anticipation (Phil. 1:22-23). The frustration to which the world has been subjected and in which we participate will not be found in heaven, thus completing the redemption of which we now have only a foretaste (Rom. 8:20-24). For us, to live is Christ, a great reason for joy, and to die is gain, a greater reason for joy (Phil. 1:21).

Is it possible that reckoning these truths can indeed produce joy? It is, be-

cause this eliminates the force of those things that take away joy by reminding us of six great reasons for being joyful! And those six reasons are eternally true, in contrast to the things that take away joy, which are temporary. Joy that is founded upon such realities can co-exist with sorrow, pain, disappointment, and righteous anger. But it cannot co-exist with bitterness, selfish anger, and despair, for these are attitudes that contradict the six realities.

Joy and Feelings of Depression

I am going to dare to say that the joy of the Lord can even co-exist with our common experiences of depression, as well as be of help to clinical, major depression, which often has biochemical origins. Good and conscientious Christians, especially those who are in the so-called helping professions, often experience depression. Things like tiredness, sickness, loneliness, negative response to our work, or a sense of failure can trigger this. While we may be feeling terrible, the six realities tell us that there is a deeper reality than our feelings. Reckoning those six realities helps us bear the pain, for we are able to look at life with a positive attitude. Depression (a feeling) will then not turn into despair (an attitude). A ray of light creeps through the gloom and helps sustain us till the depression passes.

I have found that these thoughts help me a lot when I suffer from feelings of depression. As a result of the reckoning and the attitude change that results from it, we may be motivated to take steps that help us handle the depression constructively. We may decide to get some extra sleep or rest or recreation or exercise. We may decide to take off and spend some extra time with family or with friends. We may share our pain with someone else. We may go and talk to the people with whom we are upset. Of course, I am not discounting the important role that a professional physician or counselor can play in situations of extreme depression.

What I want to stress most of all here is that devout and victorious Christians may sometimes feel terrible, just as Jeremiah, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Paul did, as expressed in the verses we quoted in the previous section. We must not forget that "laments" represent an important type of biblical literature. There are about 50 laments in the book of Psalms, making lament the largest category of Psalms. Those who are lamenting in the Bible were great people of God, not people in a backslidden state. Yet two typical features of the lament psalms show us that lament can co-exist with the joy of the Lord, as we have defined it in this article. These features are the statement of confidence in God (Psalm 22:3-5) and the vow to praise God (Psalm 22:22-26).

Sri Lanka is a land devastated by war, suffering, violence, and corruption. I have come to believe that lament must be an integral part of the life of all Christians living in Sri Lanka. Not to lament may be evidence of callous disregard for the needs of our people. For most Christians, there are reasons for lament that are closer to home than the devastation of a nation. We may groan as we see loved ones suffering or living in rebellion against God. Sometimes we may groan because of the pain that wracks our own bodies.

Paul gave a theological basis for lament when he said, "We ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies" (Rom. 8:23). Living as we do in a world subjected to frustration (Rom. 8:20), we will groan until we get to heaven. Then a few sentences later, in verse 26, using a noun (*stenagmos*) directly related to the verb "groan" (*stenazō*) which he used in verse 23, Paul says, "the Spirit himself intercedes for us with *groans* that words cannot express" (Rom. 8:26). Even God is groaning! So I try to tell myself and others when we suffer from bad feelings, "Don't feel bad about feeling bad. This may be a necessary experience along God's joyful pathway." Thinking such thoughts takes away

some of the despair that is often associated with bad feelings in the lives of Christians.

Pursuing Joy

But how could we reckon biblical truths about ourselves so as to have the joy of the Lord? Don't most Christians—happy ones and unhappy ones—accept each of these six features as essential parts of their theology? They do, but we must let these theological truths travel down from the mind (where they are stored) to the heart, so that they can challenge and influence our attitudes. This process may not be as easy as it seems. I think one of the saddest things I have seen in recent years in Sri Lanka is the phenomenon of angry Christian workers. Often they are angry at the church and its leaders because of the way they have been treated. My belief in the indispensability of joy has been greatly challenged over the years, living as I do in a land filled with corruption, lawlessness, violence, and ethnic strife. Yet I have seen people who, while having every reason to be very bitter and angry, radiantly exhibit the joy of the Lord.

One of my first conscious struggles for joy in my Christian life was when I was a university student. My heart was in the ministry, but I was studying botany, zoology, and chemistry for my degree. One-third of our grades was given for practical work done in the laboratory. But I was terribly clumsy with my hands. The result was that I never did well in my studies, even though I worked hard at them. I would often struggle with deep discouragement. During this time, I got into the habit of going for long walks. I would not turn back to return to where I was staying until I had a sense that the joy of the Lord was restored. Sometimes this did not happen for a long time, but I would persevere in grappling with the Lord until his joy returned. When that happened, I would turn to come back and then give myself to intercession during the walk back.

Since beginning "full-time" ministry, things have become a little more complex. My hurt and anger now come from people among whom I minister, and the wounds are a little deeper. But the same principle of grappling with the Lord till the joy returns has served me well. Sometimes it takes longer for the joy to return. Often an issue I thought I had settled with the Lord and buried resurfaces to torment me with bitterness. This means that I now have to be even more conscientious in my battle for the joy of the Lord. But most often the victory will not come until I can heartily affirm, without any reservation, that God is going to turn this thing that I resent into something good, and therefore I do not need to be angry or anxious.

Joy and spiritual disciplines

Over the years, I have discovered some aids to reckoning that have helped me. Prayer is the first one that comes to mind. But I will discuss this later. Next comes reading the Scriptures. The year 1989 was one of the bleakest times in our nation, and estimates of the death toll for the year from an attempted revolution went as high as 60,000. There was almost never a time when there was not a body floating on the river at the edge of our town. And most of the dead were young people, the people God has called me to serve. Schools were closed much of the time, and this meant that our children were at home. Many people left the country during this period, saying it was for the sake of their children. But we believed that God wanted our family to stay in Sri Lanka, no matter what happened.

We did have to think about the welfare of our children. My wife and I felt that the greatest legacy we could leave for them was a happy home. This was a challenge, considering that there were so many political and social things going on that we as Christians legitimately needed to be angry and upset about. Despite the surrounding national gloom, I needed to help keep the home bright. My moods were not helping with this! One day when I was in

one of my bad moods, my wife told the children loudly enough for me to hear (our wives have a way of doing that!), "Thaththi (Daddy) is in a bad mood. Let's hope he will go and read his Bible." She had hit upon a very important theological principle. When we are overwhelmed by temporal circumstances, we must fix our eyes on the deeper realities of life: those unchanging truths in Scripture that enable us to look at life from the perspective of God's sovereignty. This is why the psalmist said, "If your law had not been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction" (Psalm 119:92).

I have also found that spending time with a hymnbook is a great remedy for the loss of joy. Here again, when we don't have thoughts to lift us up because of what we are experiencing, we are reminded of eternal truth by the writings of others. And those thoughts are set to music, the language of the heart. This enhances the process of truth traveling from the mind to the heart. So when Paul and Silas sang hymns to God in the jail in Philippi (Acts 16:25), they were using an effective remedy for discouragement.

Joy from counseling and community

I have, however, had to minister with some Christian workers for whom the process of the recovery of joy is much harder. This is partly because they carry wounds, often inflicted in childhood, that have not been healed. When those wounds are touched, extreme reactions often result. I am thankful for people like David Seamands (1981) who, through books like *Healing for Damaged Emotions*, have alerted us to this problem. The title of that book suggests that even these wounds can be healed. I think it is very significant that in 1 Corinthians 13:5, where we are told that love "keeps no record of wrongs," the verb used is *logizomai*, from which we get the idea of reckoning. Healing comes when we cease to reckon the hurts we have received, by letting God's love in us overcome the hurt of the wounds with which we have been inflicted.

This process of healing may be lengthy, and it may call for much patience. But I believe that it is completed only when God's love can break through with healing, so that the wounds will no longer hinder us from reckoning the six great truths that I have described. A sensitive and caring community, where hurt Christian workers can experience the acceptance that such costly, group commitment provides, can do much in bringing healing. Often trained counselors can play an important role in the healing process, by dealing with issues in a way that untrained people find difficult. However, the work of counselors is greatly enhanced through the support of a community that practices costly commitment to its members. Would that all our ministry teams were such communities!

Actually, I think that we cannot separate the joy of the Lord from the community of the Lord. All of Christianity is lived in community. While each individual is ultimately responsible for ensuring that his or her quest for the joy of the Lord is carried through conscientiously, the community can do much in mediating this joy to us. As I think of the times that I have been deeply hurt in ministry and of the struggles that I have had with bitterness over these hurts, I also think of the way God used my friends and colleagues to heal me of the pain. They listened to me; they advised my about how I should respond to the situation; and the act of verbally sharing my pain with them did much to help give me release from the burden of hurt that I was carrying.

After someone has hurt us, we could be so upset that we could extend our anger with particular people to cover all people in general. This is the attitude that says that humans cannot and must not be trusted because they always fail us. There are many such angry people around in the world today. When our friends lend a sympathetic ear and minister lovingly to us,

we lose our reason for being angry at humanity. We sense that our friends are suffering with us in our pain, as Paul said they should (1 Cor. 12:26; Gal. 6:2). That takes away that lonely bitterness that destroys whatever vestiges of joy are left in us.

So God often mediates His joy through the loving concern of committed Christian friends and colleagues. Many of the biblical descriptions of joy are given in the context of the community, such as the well-known verse, "The joy of the Lord is your strength" (Neh. 8:10).

What I am going to write now seems so basic that it may look out of place in a book like this. But it is something that I have seen so often in my life and in the lives of my colleagues that it should be mentioned. One of the most common causes for the loss of joy in Christian workers is sin that has not been dealt with biblically. I have seen this so much that, when I find a colleague who has become unusually judgmental or who flies into a rage unusually quickly, one of the first questions I ask is whether he or she is burdened by some guilt that has not been cleared. Asking forgiveness from God and from those who have been affected by our sin, as well as engaging in other forms of restitution, are essential features in the processes of recovery from sin and restoration of joy (Psalm 51).

Unbiblical Stress

As I have pointed out, amid the stresses and strains of ministry, we must conscientiously pursue the joy of the Lord. Indeed, suffering is an essential ingredient of ministry, and stress and strain are two of the commonest expressions of suffering in a minister's life today. But not all the stress we face today is biblical. I have found much help from what some Western authors, especially Dr. Archibald Hart, have written about stress. I believe that there are two types of unbiblical stress commonly experienced by Christian workers: stress from wrong motives and stress from poor delegation.

Stress From Wrong Motives

This type of stress comes from sinful ambitions for success—mixed motives. We want our church or organization to grow or our book to be the best in its field. This often leads to a workaholism arising from the fact that we find our primary fulfillment in striving for earthly goals. Those with this problem do not know how to take a Sabbath rest, because they get too much fulfillment from work and success. This gives rise to a lot of stress, and failure becomes a huge burden.

I think some of us will battle with earthly ambition all our lives. Besides, it is often difficult to know when godly ambition has given way to earthly ambition. This problem is particularly acute among leaders, because often they have come to the position of leadership through sheer determination and ambition, in part by overcoming a strong sense of insecurity and inferiority. This could be a great testimony to God's grace. But it is also possible for such leaders to find too much security and identity through success.

I think God in His mercy permits us to have failures and irritations to make us aware of the problem of fleshly motivation and to purge us of its dross. A well-prepared program that we lead is ruined because of rain or because of a careless mistake that someone else makes. After working hard at a sermon, we make a mistake during its delivery, and the people seem to focus more on the mistake than on the content of the sermon. Someone we regard as our spiritual child acts in a way that is unbecoming of a Christian. I find that often after I have written a book or article on a certain topic, a problem emerges in our ministry that shows how much we fall short in this same area that I have written on!

Our response to these failures and irritations brings into focus what our inner motivations are. Our overreactions show how much selfishness and fleshly motivation are in us. The corresponding battle

to deal with these situations biblically is used by God to refine us and purify our motives. The situations become the disciplines about which Hebrews 12:4-11 talks. Verse 11 brings this passage to a climax: "No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it."

The blessing, of course, is only "for those who have been trained by it." These are those who acknowledge that they have a problem, who seek God's forgiveness, and who apologize to those who have been hurt by their excessive reactions. Some will get even angrier because of the "discipline," and that will only increase their stress. Others will thank God for the rebuke and pray for grace to have more pure motives in their service for God. They experience "a harvest of righteousness and peace." Peace, of course, is the opposite of stress.

Stress From Poor Delegation

The other type of unbiblical stress comes from an unwillingness to delegate. Jethro pointed out this problem to his son-in-law, Moses (Ex. 18). All Christians have gifts, and it is the leader's responsibility to enable others to exercise their gifts. So we will always be delegating responsibilities to others. If we do not do this, we will end up bearing unnecessary burdens. We will go to see sick people that others could see. We will speak at meetings that others should speak at. This often comes from a messiah-complex that causes us to think that we are the ones who must do all the important things in our ministries. We will end up driving ourselves to the ground.

One of the most complex challenges that we face as we mature in ministry is to learn what our priorities are and to let our schedules reflect those priorities. We must really discipline ourselves to refuse many opportunities for ministry that are outside our primary calling. Indeed, we die for those we lead, but we are not called to save the whole world. Only the eternal God can do that.

Even the biblical commands limit the scope of the people for whom we are called to lay down our lives. Jesus speaks of our friends (John 15:12-14) and Paul of our wives (Eph. 5:25). I do not think these are absolute restrictions. We can die for others too! But I do feel that it is biblical to say that we have a special responsibility to some people whom God has called us to serve. These are the people we should concentrate on. Hence, we simply cannot kill ourselves trying to solve every problem that we encounter.

This is easier said than done, of course. I believe it is so important to identify our primary callings. For me, they are to Youth for Christ, to my home church, to itinerant Bible teaching, and to writing. This means that there are many things which people expect me to do that I should not do. I hope my family and my fellow leaders in Youth for Christ and in my church understand this. But I have had to face some criticism from others about my non-involvement in several programs and causes. I know, however, that despite my commitment to the principles outlined above, there are a lot of things that I agree to do which I should not be doing. This will probably be a battle that I will have to fight all my life.

Burnout and Prayer

While unbiblical stress must be avoided, we must affirm that stress and strain are inevitable in ministry, as in life. I demonstrated this earlier, using quotations from Paul's epistles. As a family man who is active in grassroots ministry and leadership and who also tries to do some speaking and writing, I have experienced a fair share of this stress. Some of my friends have warned me that I will get burned out soon. I listen carefully to their concern, and I consider how to make adjustments and continue on in the ministry. I believe that time spent daily *lingering* in the presence of God is a great

antidote to burnout and other ill effects of stress. Let me tell you why I think this is so.

If spending a good time with God each day is a non-negotiable factor in our daily calendar, then this time could really help slow us down and heal that unhealthy restlessness and rushed attitude that could cause burnout. There are few things that help heal our restlessness as time spent lingering in the presence of God. If a fixed time has been set apart each day, then there is no point rushing through the exercise, since we are going to spend that amount of time whether we rush or not. Therefore, we are forced to change gears from stressful rush to restful lingering in the presence of God. In recent years, I have become more and more convinced of the value of this shift of gears to slow down the terrible malady of drivenness to which we leaders are susceptible. Uncontrolled activity without slowing down feeds our tendency to be driven people. Driven people could drive themselves and others to the ground, either through tiredness or through breaking Christian principles in their relentless pursuit of success.

Times alone with God (and also Sabbaths faithfully kept) help battle the natural tendency of motivated leaders to become driven people. An hour or more spent each day in the presence of the almighty and sovereign Lord of the universe does wonders to our sense of security (Psalm 46:1-11), the lack of which is another cause of burnout. With security comes "the peace of God which transcends all understanding" (Phil. 4:7), which is surely a wonderful treasure with which to live life. When we do not have security in our relationship with God, we will be restlessly running from activity to activity, subconsciously hoping that our activity would fill the void in our lives. We are, in fact, afraid to stop and be silent before God. I once heard the Singaporean church leader Dr. Robert Solomon say, "We are uncomfortable with silence because silence forces us to face God." So we go on with our busy activity till we drive ourselves to the ground!

Paul says that the peace that I just described is the result of presenting our requests to God (Phil. 4:6). When we spend time with God, we are able to "cast all [our] anxiety on Him, because He cares for [us]" (1 Pet. 5:7). It was during a time of deep crisis in our ministry that I discovered the great release that comes from consciously handing over our burdens to God. I used to have difficulty going to sleep, because I was overwhelmed by worry over the situation. I learned to confess my inability to bear these burdens alone and to place them upon God by a conscious act of release. And release was what I felt as a result.

If, during our time with God, a lot of time is spent in intercession, we have become conduits of love. When we pray for others, love is flowing out of our lives. But this is not a love that drains us of our emotional strength. We are praying, which means that we are in touch with Him who is the inexhaustible source of love. As love goes out through prayer, God's love comes in, and the regular flow of love in and out of our lives makes us glow with the joy that love alone can produce.

So our time spent with God each day becomes the most refreshing thing that we do. Such freshness attacks those triggers of burnout that often accompany the stresses and strains of costly ministry. In recent years, there has been a welcome return to emphasizing the value of corporate worship among Evangelicals. Perhaps the time is also ripe for resolutely returning to the value of one's personal time with God.

Sacrifice From Commitment to Community

Often when my Western friends hear of all the problems we face in our war-torn country, they tell me something like, "We don't realize how fortunate we are to live in the West, where we don't have all these problems." If I am able to respond

to this comment, I usually say that the biggest pain I have experienced has not been in connection with the war in the land but in connection with Christian community life. And that pain is not confined to our nation. Anyone practicing true, biblical, community life in any part of the world will experience much pain. We all fall short and fail each other. Sometimes, though, this pain is avoided by inappropriately lowering one's standards of community life. I fear this has happened a lot in the church today.

If you were to make a list of all the times Paul talks about his sufferings in the epistles, you would be amazed at how often his commitment and love to those in the Christian community caused his pain. He talks about his physical sufferings and sometimes even gives a comprehensive listing of them (2 Cor. 6:4-10; 11:23-27). But it is when he describes his relationship problems with his fellow Christians that he shows his deepest feelings of pain. In 2 Corinthians 2, he expresses his inward turmoil about the opposition to him that had surfaced in Corinth. He was in Troas awaiting the arrival of Titus, whom he had sent to Corinth with a severe letter. Titus had not come yet, and he was in so much turmoil that he could not even preach the gospel, although a door of opportunity to do so had opened for him. So he went on to Macedonia (2 Cor. 2:12-13). Titus eventually brought good news of the Corinthians' remorse over the way they had hurt Paul. He was so thrilled about this that remembering it prompted his rapturous outburst on the glory of the ministry, which forms the heart of 2 Corinthians (2 Cor. 2:14–7:1). Later he explains, "But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus" (2 Cor. 7:6). All this shows how deeply Paul was hurt and how much he was comforted by his relationships.

When we love deeply, we also hurt deeply. Many people do not want to be hurt in this way. So they stay at a safe distance from others. They do not commit themselves too deeply to others and are not very open with them, for that would make them vulnerable to hurt. Paul, on the other hand, opened himself up to others and was often deeply hurt by their rejection. He expresses his vulnerability in 2 Corinthians 6:11-12: "We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians, and opened wide our hearts to you. We are not withholding our affection from you, but you are withholding yours from us" (see also 1 Thess. 2:8).

So when we open ourselves to others and express costly commitment to them, we become vulnerable to pain. Paul expresses this pain vividly in his epistles. In 2 Corinthians 11:28-29 he says, "I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches. Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn?" In Galatians 4:19-20 he says, "My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you, how I wish I could be with you now and change my tone, because I am perplexed about you!" (See also 2 Cor. 2:4, 12-13; 7:5-7; 12:15; Col. 1:24; 2:1; 1 Thess. 3:5-7.)

We avoid much of the pain from community that Paul talks about by lowering our standards for what we expect from others. In the early church, "all the believers were one in heart and mind" (Acts 4:32). This must have been difficult to achieve. That is why Paul has to urge the Christians in Philippi to work hard at achieving it (Phil. 2:2; 4:2-3). In Acts we find that the members shared a oneness of mind even in the area of possessions (Acts 2:42-46; 4:32).

Many Christians consider this type of community life too difficult to achieve. It is too much of a threat to their personal independence and too time-consuming for our efficiency-oriented age. So they have settled for a model of community life that is governed by rules and tasks. Problems are dealt with in terms of conformity to the rules of the group or the tasks people have been assigned. If the crisis is fairly serious, an inquiry is held, and some action is taken based on the findings. The

problem is dealt with efficiently, but is this the biblical method appropriate for Christian communities where personal relationships are so important?

I think a more biblical method is the more painful method of dealing with problems pastorally. I am not saying that rules are unimportant. What I am saying is that pastoral care is more important, even though it is much more time-consuming and perhaps much more painful. When someone breaks a rule, we talk to the person and try to find out the reason for the infraction. In solving the problem, we may choose to institute some disciplinary action against the person. But the person is comprehensively ministered to in the process. Unfortunately, we rarely adopt this approach today. Many Christian leaders think that such pastoral responses to problems are not practical, are too painful, and are too time-consuming. The person who has done something wrong may be very angry with the leader, and when we deal with him or her pastorally, this anger may surface. It may take three hours to complete the conversation. Many leaders don't have that much time and energy to give to those they lead. The great biblical leaders, like Jesus and Paul, however, spent such quality time with those they led (see John 1:39; Acts 20:7).

It may seem much more efficient and effective to adopt approaches to organizational problems which are derived from secular management practices rather than from the Bible. There is a refreshing rediscovery of the importance of commitment to people among some secular management thinkers. But I do not think that we can ever expect the world to adopt the principle that Jesus taught in John 15 that, in a community, members die for each other (vv. 12-14). In the Christian method of community life, the leader "dies" for those who have done wrong by going through a long, drawn-out process of listening to them, being exposed to their bitterness, and ministering to them in depth. The inconvenience and pain of this process are part of the suffering of Christian community life of which I am speaking.

Indeed, although the John 15 type of community life is time-consuming and painful, it also brings a depth of joy and fulfillment that few things on earth can match. In 2 Corinthians, Paul speaks a lot about his pain over his relationship with the Corinthians. But he also describes his sheer joy triggered by their positive response to him. In Philippians, Paul pleads for unity (4:2), and he says that his joy is made complete only when they are "like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose" (2:2). But he also describes the Philippians as "my brothers, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown" (4:1). This, then, is a life with deep pain, but it is also a life of deep fulfillment.

Yet, as in the case of the other forms of suffering that we have talked about in this article, amidst all the pain of community we must experience the joy of the Lord. Without that, we would not have the strength to take on the pain that comes with community life. We have this bedrock confidence in God, who has said that, even though a mother may forget the baby at her breast, He will not forget us (Isa. 49:15). That gives us the strength to open ourselves in deep commitment to others, which in turn makes us vulnerable to deep hurt. But we are able to handle the pain when our Christian brothers and sisters hurt us, because our strength comes from something more basic to life than human relationships, namely, the joy that comes from our relationship with God.

I think the sequence in Philippians 4:1-4 is very significant. First, Paul describes the Philippians as his joy and crown (v. 1). The Philippian Christians made him very happy. Then he pleads with two warring factions to unite (vv. 2-3). This is a description of his pain. In fact, elsewhere in Philippians he implies that the lack of unity in the church took away some of his joy (Phil. 2.2). In Philippians 4:4, Paul comes to a non-negotiable essential of the Christian life, when twice he asks his readers to rejoice in the Lord and to

do so always (v. 4). That's what true Christian community life is like. There will be times of pain, and there is joy over each other, but always there must be the joy of the Lord.

Sacrificing for the Community as an Antidote to Drivenness

There is one more area related to the topic of suffering and community that needs to be addressed. I believe it is very relevant to the problem of driven leadership that we are seeing in the church today. Community, like prayer, can also act as a preventive to drivenness. Good and motivated leaders have great goals that they will somehow achieve. But they become driven leaders when they break Christian principles and drive themselves and others in an unhealthy way in achieving those goals. If, however, these motivated leaders have submitted to the body of Christ as represented by the community to which they belong, they will encounter many obstacles to their success. And attending to these will sometimes appear to be a great sacrifice.

A member of the community may not be in agreement with the plans, and trying to persuade that person may take a long time and hold up progress. The driven leader may ignore the dissenter and carry on with the program. A motivated but Christ-like leader would give the time and energy required for working toward winning the dissenter's approval.

In the heat of the battle to achieve the goal, some people are invariably going to get hurt. The motivated leader may be tense because of the pressure of the huge project, and that may express itself in a temper tantrum that leaves someone very hurt. Sometimes it may simply be a misunderstanding between two members of the team. Often tension in the leader's family comes in the middle of a project, because the leader tends to neglect or be impatient with his or her family at such a time. A driven leader may ignore those who have been hurt and pursue the goal. A motivated but Christ-like leader will take the time to minister to hurt people.

When such problems emerge, it would look like a huge sacrifice to the leader to stop the hard work towards achieving the goal in order to deal with them. But I have found that such interruptions are God's way of getting us to put first things first. So we take what seems like an enormously costly step of holding back our activities in order to minister to the community. Of course, that step is usually well worth the trouble, because as a result of it, the members of the community are united, and therefore they can work much more effectively. The end product will be so much more honoring to God, with the whole community (including our families) enjoying its fruit and, therefore, with the joy of the success being more complete. In the process, the motivated leader is saved from the trap of becoming a driven leader. He or she stopped from the busy activity to attend to something that is demanded by Christian principles. Drivenness is expressed in busy and ambitious activity that is done in a way that breaks Christian principles.

Anticipating and Accepting Suffering

It seems to me that the general approach to suffering in most churches in missionary-sending nations and the way that missions is marketed today do not adequately prepare missionaries for life on the mission field. So much is told about the excitement of missions that people are not adequately prepared for the cost. Churches in the West may teach people how to respond to suffering, but they may neglect teaching people about the indispensability of suffering—a doctrine clearly taught in the New Testament.

If missionaries are truly going to identify with and become servants of those they are called to serve, they will face severe frustration, along with what initially looks like failure and fruitlessness. If they have

not been adequately prepared for this reality, the pain of suffering will be greater than it needs to be. It often results in disillusionment and deep disappointment with God. Disappointment with God is one of the hardest things to bear, for it deprives us of one of the greatest antidotes to suffering: hoping in God.

I wonder if some missionaries, in order to avoid suffering and pain, are opting not to identify fully with the people they are going to serve. Their lifestyle or their refusal to be vulnerable distances them from the people. Those who join with them may do so for wrong motives, hoping that some of the wealth of the missionary will trickle down to them. These are unscrupulous people, and missionaries may end up being deceived by them. Unfortunately, many missionaries conclude that the nationals are not to be trusted. The true picture is that the missionaries were so distant in relating to the people that many persons of integrity did not feel inclined to associate closely with them.

I think the most common expression of suffering for missionaries today is severe frustration. When faced with this, missionaries may change their work to something less troubling. Instead of persevering in the difficult experience of working with a group of believers, they may become consultants who offer their expertise to various groups without the pain of having to work closely with one group. A person called to evangelize a people group that is resistant to the gospel may shift to evangelizing a people group that is more responsive to the gospel. Some, after seeing no evangelistic results, abandon the tough work of evangelization and opt for a teaching ministry. Others return home in the middle or at the end of their first term, deeply disillusioned and perhaps even angry with the missionary mobilizers who did not adequately prepare them for the suffering they encountered.

I want to encourage as many national Christians and missionaries as I can to bear in mind constantly that suffering is an indispensable feature of discipleship. Then when it comes, they will not be surprised, and they will know how to respond to it biblically. But if I am to encourage Christians in this way, I will need to suffer as they do. Unfortunately, unlike Paul when he suffered for the church (Col. 1:24), I do not always embrace this suffering joyfully. In fact, I often give in to self-pity and start grumbling. In these circumstances, I need to spend time grappling and theologizing, so that I can learn once again to be joyful in the midst of suffering. This article is the fruit of such grappling.

Final Thought

Our fundamental call in Scripture is to have fellowship with Jesus (1 Cor. 1:9). Joy and suffering are part of this call. So we approach each day by seeking to ensure that our souls are happy in the Lord. And we also approach each day with a desire to be living sacrifices. We know, of course, that this same sacrifice will be the pathway to deeper joy and a closer relationship with Him!

Reflection and Discussion

1. Recall some examples in which joy and suffering were inseparable for you. What did you learn from these experiences?

2. The author describes six types of reckoning. Which ones are part of your life, and which ones do you need to work on?

3. Are there some examples of unbiblical stress that are affecting you? If so, what can help you change these?

4. Spending good time with the Lord is seen by the author as non-negotiable. What does this mean practically for you in your life?

5. There is joy in the Lord, even when there is pain in and from community life. To what extent is this joy part of your life?

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23

Giants, Foxes, Wolves, And Flies: Helping Ourselves and Others

Kelly O'Donnell
Michèle Lewis O'Donnell

This chapter is a collection of four short articles focusing on common areas of struggle and growth for mission personnel. Any or all of them can be used by individuals for personal reflection or by teams as part of team building sessions.

"Blessed be the Lord who trains my hands for war and my fingers for battle."
Psalm 144:1

Have you ever seen the movie, *The Wizard of Oz*? Filmed in 1939, this fantasy classic portrays the adventures of a young girl who tries to return home from a magic land lying somewhere over a rainbow. During one scene, Dorothy and her companions approach a dark forest en route to the Emerald City. Anxiously wondering what wild beasts might lie within, they begin to chant, "Lions and tigers and bears, oh my!"

For cross-cultural workers frequently beset with analogous challenges, a similar refrain can be heard: "Giants and foxes and wolves and flies!" Who are these creatures, and what do they have to do with our life and work? In brief, they are biblical metaphors representing the struggles that we often experience as we try to serve God in new ways or unfamiliar places.

Here's a quick overview:

- Giants seek to *disable* us by exploiting our vulnerabilities (2 Sam. 21:15-22).
- Foxes try to *distract* us and cause us to drift off our primary tasks (SS 2:15).
- Wolves endeavor to *distress* us, keeping our stress levels high and our lives out of balance (Matt. 10:16).
- Flies purpose to *disgrace* us by the contaminating effects of sin (Eccl. 10:1).

The enemy seeks to use all four of these creatures to sift us like wheat and ultimately destroy our life and work for the Lord. Let's take a closer look at these creatures and explore some ways to deal with them.

1.
Fighting Giants, Facing Vulnerabilities

There are some tall troublemakers lurking out there, waiting to take advantage of our vulnerabilities. How do we prepare our workers to handle these troublemakers—and their own vulnerabilities? King David's last battlefield experience highlights some strategies.

Once again, there was war with Philistia, Scripture tells us in 2 Samuel 21:15. And once again, David and the men of Israel made the familiar trek down to fight at Gob, lying on the border area between the two nations.

This time, two things were different. First, David was probably an older man, without the robust strength of his youth. Second, a Philistine giant called something like Ishbi-Benob was out to get David.

The battle commenced. In the midst of the fighting, David became exhausted. It would seem that the giant had been waiting for such a moment—when David was the most vulnerable—in order to make his move. So his assault was likely a deliberate, premeditated act. You might say that Ishbi-Benob wanted to *shish-kebab* David.

Interestingly, the text points out that Ishbi-Benob was wearing something new on his waist, perhaps a belt or a sword. The interpretation of this is not entirely clear, but its inclusion in the account is significant. One possible interpretation is that he was wearing a belt of honor, suggesting that he was a champion among the Philistines. Another possibility is that he wore a new sword, which may have been forged or dedicated for a specific task, such as killing David.

It's Abishai to the rescue, though. He comes to David's aid (surely at the risk of his own life), smites the giant, and kills him.

Now comes the important epilogue. David's valiant men gather around him and make him swear that he will never go into battle again. Why? Well, not just for David's own safety. Something even more important is at stake. It was "in order that the lamp of Israel might not go out" (2 Sam. 21:17).

What does this phrase mean? As we understand it, David, as king, was like a lamp that reflected the character and purposes of God to Israel and the surrounding peoples. To extinguish this witness would be an assault on God's redemptive purposes for the nations. Sound familiar?

Christian workers likewise are lamps to the particular people groups and ministries in which they work. We are the light of the world, the Lord tells us (Matt. 5:14). As with David, the forces of darkness seek to prey upon our vulnerabilities in order to diminish the intensity of our light—our witness—among a people group, among our neighbors, and so on. It's an age-old tactic whose only antidote is to fight the giants and face our vulnerabilities with the strength of the Lord and with the help of close friends.

Training Suggestions: Watching Over Our Hearts

We see training not only as a time to develop additional ministry skills, but also as an opportunity to reassess personal strengths and weaknesses. Indeed, the former is often the primary item on our own training agenda, while the latter can be the primary one on the Lord's! Like David and his men, we must rise to the challenge and venture down again into the border areas within our hearts, to take a closer look at our own giants and vulnerabilities. Unwanted habits such as eating struggles, a need to control others, self-hatred, depression, and many painful memories can meet us there, ready to assault us.

These struggles are to be distinguished from more serious and long-standing patterns of depression; significant marital problems; sexual identity struggles related to, for example, childhood sexual abuse; or other struggles such as addiction to por-

nography. These serious problems require professional help and can be identified through proper screening and selection procedures. Screening usually occurs before the training phase, but in many programs the two actually overlap.

Sharing about our struggles is risky, of course. And it is best done in training settings where there are caring people with big hearts and good helping skills, where confidentiality is honored, and where weaknesses are seen as opportunities for growth. If these are lacking, find another place!

We suggest that Christian training programs for cross-cultural ministries include the following member care components:

- Include relevant personal growth opportunities—times to look at oneself and share from one's heart up front with safe people.
- Let applicants/trainees know in advance about this emphasis on both personal and skill development.
- Use trainers and staff that model both vulnerability and strength.
- Demonstrate the overall organizational ethos (group culture) that allows for weakness, encourages appropriate self-disclosure with supportive people, and offers mutual care opportunities between staff.

These components not only help to prevent problems later on, but also reflect an important part of the body life described in the New Testament (e.g., "bear one another's burdens (giants!) and thus fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2)).

Proverbs 4:23 instructs us to watch over our heart with all diligence, for from it flow the streams of life. Self-awareness and accountability are key for both personal growth and ministry effectiveness. We see the training phase of ministry as a critical time to encourage and model this process for our future workers. One practical way of doing this is via small-group Bible studies on this passage about David and on other passages with similar themes. Here are some questions to get you going:

Applications

Let's look at the biblical text again in 2 Samuel 21:15-17 and do some self-exploration. Read through the eight items below and answer each question. Take time to discuss your responses.

1. Like David, we all have vulnerabilities. These become even more visible for those who are in leadership positions. Sometimes we may not be aware of them until a crisis brings them to light. What are a few areas of vulnerability for you?

2. Apart from their literal meaning, what might the "giants" represent? Are they metaphors for spiritual forces, vulnerabilities, or what?

3. It was said that Ishbi-Benob had a premeditated plan for killing David. Do you think there is a similar spiritual strategy to hinder God's life in you and His work through you? If so, how?

4. David, as the leader of Israel, was a lamp reflecting the character and purposes of God. How is this true of your life? List three ways that you are doing the same practically.

5. Let's look at mutual support between workers. What does this passage imply about teamwork, our need for each other, and our willingness to let others speak into our lives?

6. David's battlefield experience began with a giant (Goliath) and ended with a giant (Ishbi-Benob). But these were not the last of the giants. Verses 18-22 of chapter 21 go on to talk about other encounters with giants. Which types of people and which types of gifts are needed to subdue the various giants? Are giants ever finally vanquished?

7. These giants did not just show up one day on the battle line in order to be promptly slain by a God-appointed warrior. Reading between the lines, we can conclude there must have been many casualties inflicted on the Jewish army by the giants. Are casualties among workers inevitable? Which personal wounds are you aware of which have come as a result

of your battles with giants? Take time to bring these areas before the Lord in prayer.

8. Can you make any other applications of this passage for your life, family, or team?

2.
Capturing the Foxes: Help for Cluttered Lives

Have you ever wanted to unclutter your desk, room, house—or even your life? You know, do a major spring cleaning? We sure have at times. If only we could just magically jettison the myriad of internal pressures that can plague us and the multitude of external demands that can distract us! Such are the yearnings of many of us involved in cross-cultural work. Let's take a closer look at some of these normal, though nonetheless unsettling sources of clutter, and let's look at a few ways to organize our lives better.

Solomon said, "Capture the foxes, the little foxes, that ruin the vineyard, while the vineyard is in blossom" (SS 2:15). What are these foxes? In the context of cross-cultural work, we would say that they are metaphors for the everyday distractions that take workers away from their primary tasks. They are the daily chores, the frequent interruptions, the legal red tape, the time needed to set up a tentmaking business, communication inefficiencies, and so on. And they are the internal preoccupations that demand our attention—concerns about family and work relationships, self-doubts from the past, loneliness, the impact of others' pain and misery, and anxieties about the future. These all eat up workers' schedules and energy, and they often interfere with the very reason they are in ministry.

We like to refer to this distracting process as "worker drift"—the natural tendency whereby life's "currents" divert one's focus (time, activities, resources, and heart direction) to areas that are peripheral to his/her objectives. In other words, workers, families, teams, and even sending agencies succumb to the inevitable trend to "major on the minors." It is not simply an issue of time management, but something far more challenging: "drift management." Let's take a closer look at seven of these distractions—foxes—to understand better what cross-cultural workers face.

- **Doing good.** It has been aptly said that the good can become the enemy of the best. Many good things demand the attention of cross-cultural workers—like playing host or tour guide to visitors or entertaining nationals who are not members of the population one is trying to reach or serve. It is a real challenge to find the balance between involvement in such good activities (which may or may not help one connect more with the host culture) and pursuing one's primary call.
- **Demands of living.** Basic subsistence realities are a constant energy consumer. Some wives, for example, can spend much of their day taking their children to different schools, shopping, and cooking, leaving little time for language study and other ministry-related activities. Tentmakers are frequently stretched by the need to blend their work demands with family life, social obligations, and time with nationals. The problem is there just isn't enough time!
- **Developmental push.** This refers to the normal internal tugs that we experience during different seasons of our life. For example: the male worker in mid-life wanting to change careers and/or see something concrete established as a result of his work; the couple who meet in the host country, fall in love, and decide to return to the home country to get married and live; the push to return home to care for aging parents; the question of whether to accompany adolescent children back home as they enter into a secondary school. These and other inner yearnings must be acknowledged and prayerfully resolved.
- **Deployment issues.** Many workers call this the "seven-year itch"—the desire to move on, try something new, seek

fulfillment by working in a different way. Some may feel underemployed (the person with graduate training who teaches six hours of English each week only), underutilized (the faithful, full-time mom who wishes she had more time with nationals), or overworked (people in demanding jobs). Wrestling with the issue of personal fulfillment through one's work and embracing the need for sacrifice are an ongoing experience for many.

- **Defaulting to the status quo.** There is a tendency in all of us to gravitate towards the familiar and the convenient. In a cross-cultural setting, this tendency can present itself as a desire to speak/learn a trade language rather than a more difficult heart language; spending extra time with expatriates rather than pursuing relationships with nationals; or planning seemingly endless work strategies on a computer rather than seeking out additional time with nationals. It takes self-discipline, intrinsic motivation, accountability, and commitment to stay focused on difficult tasks.
- **Differences between team members.** Our individual variations reflect the creative genius of God. But these very differences in stressful situations could appear as deviance, leading to division and conflict. Differences in work expectations, lifestyle, and relationships must be discussed, understood, and harmonized as much as possible. No one wins when differences are either covered up or left unresolved.
- **Discouragement.** Each of the previous six foxes feed into this one, making it the most menacing. Two reasons for discouragement include slow progress in one's work and having to say farewell to colleagues who move to another location. Although mourning a loss is healthy, unchecked discouragement frequently results in an inordinate self-focus that distorts one's understanding of God's perspective and decreases one's faith that God will move.

The above seven foxes (seven Ds) in and of themselves are neither wrong nor necessarily problematic. What is troublesome, though, are their unrecognized, ongoing, cumulative effects, which subtly prevent us from fulfilling our ministry (2 Tim. 4:5). Remember too that internal pressures and external distractions, although natural, can be used in unnatural ways by demonic forces. Satan is just as pleased to sabotage one's work through distracting foxes as with fearsome giants, ravenous wolves, or annoying flies.

Strategies for Capturing the Foxes

Have you ever seen a fox in the wild? We have—three of them, over a five-year period, in the woods by our house. They just seem to pop up and then vanish before you can figure out what's happening. But if you think it's hard to spot a fox, then just try catching one! In the same way, *distractions*—the little foxes from the Song of Songs 2:15—can be difficult to identify and even more difficult to apprehend. Nonetheless, there are some ways to capture these elusive creatures. Here are two proven methods: connecting with ourselves (awareness) and connecting with others (accountability).

Awareness

There is a Central Asian proverb that says, "A bitter truth is better than a sweet lie." Looking within is not always convenient or pain-free, but it certainly is far better than the alternatives: ignorance and denial. Take time to get quiet, and reflect.

Often we need a person to help us in this process—listening to the Lord, sharing with a caring friend, speaking to a counselor. We can all learn from successful "recovery" programs (e.g., dealing with unwanted habits), which emphasize a disciplined commitment to self-reflection and honesty. This is not a selfish pursuit, but rather it is an important spiritual discipline rooted in classic Christian wisdom (see Foster & Smith, 1993; Huggett, 1993).

Keeping a journal is also helpful (see Shepperson & Shepperson, 1992), especially for those working in more isolated settings. One journaling exercise that we find useful was inspired by the book *Connecting With Self and Others* (Miller et al., 1988). Find a quiet place, take a few deep breaths, and then write a current concern in the middle of a piece of paper. Draw a large circle around it. Next, respond to the five questions below, jotting down notes—that is, what you are saying to yourself—inside the circle. Pray about what you find, and consider sharing your findings with a friend.

1. What am I sensing? (physical sensations in muscles, stomach, breathing, etc.)
2. What am I feeling? (emotions)
3. What am I wanting? (changes in self, in others, in situations)
4. What am I thinking? (ideas, beliefs, themes, content)
5. What am I doing? (actions and behaviors that I do related to the concern)

Accountability

There's a Jewish proverb which says, "A true friend is the elixir of life. And those who fear the Lord make true friends." Mutual support on location is a basic necessity. Strategize together and pray through solutions to the natural drift process. Sadly, many folks do not prioritize time to build close friendships where they are. Often, it seems we are either too busy or too scared. Or sometimes the "right" persons are just not available. In the latter case, we can stay connected with confidants via letters and email. Friends help us see ourselves more clearly and support us as we set realistic limits around our work and lives (see Cloud & Townsend, 1992).

Here's an exercise that can help you build more accountability. Get together with a friend, review this article, and talk about the five items below. You can also do this with your team or family. Discuss whether and how you would want to hold each other accountable for some of your "little foxes." Using a calendar/chart is helpful to record progress daily of changes in your behaviors (e.g., praying with spouse, time with kids, use of leisure time, unwanted habits).

1. In what ways might you have drifted off your primary tasks over the past six months?
2. Which of the seven foxes previously described seem to pressure and distract you the most? Try your hand at drawing a quick picture of one of them—make it realistic, symbolic, or abstract.
3. Why do you suppose it may be hard for you to catch your foxes?
4. What helps you to stay focused on your work? List three practical steps you can take to help yourself.
5. Are there any other thoughts you have about the "little foxes"? If so, discuss your ideas.

A Final Thought

Why not do a spring cleaning and declutter some of your internal pressures and external demands? Connect with yourself more and with significant others. And as Gordon MacDonald (1989) encourages us to do, be sure to seek out "still times, safe places, and special friends" regularly.

3. Prudence in the Presence of Wolves

Mission personnel must find practical ways to be "shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves," in order not to become prey to the stress-producing wolves of ministry life.

No one would want to become "lamb chops," right? Yet that is basically what Jesus said would happen to people if they did not exercise prudence in their ministry.

Consider, for instance, His warning in Matthew 10:16, "Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and as innocent as doves." Notice that He did not send His

disciples (or us) out as emboldened lions, but as vulnerable sheep needing the flock and needing the Shepherd. Why such a solemn warning? Because ministry life is neither easy nor always safe.

When we first started working in missions as psychologists, we understood that the main struggle for missionaries was in the area of cross-cultural adjustment. Just persevere in language and culture learning, we thought, and we will probably make it. Well, we were right—sort of.

In practically no time, though, we became painfully aware of another significant stressor for those in ministry: trying to harmonize one's background/preferences with the organizational culture of the sending agency. This stressor proved to be our own greatest struggle during our first three years overseas. Like many of our fellow workers, we soon realized the draining impact of unresolved interpersonal conflict.

Next, we became more keenly aware of spiritual warfare. And to make a long story short, as we gained even more experience on the field, we began to see a host of other "wolves"—that is, stressors—which affected us and others in cross-cultural ministry.

We soon saw the need to develop a conceptual grid to help identify and deal with the various wolves that are part of ministry life abroad. "CHOPS," as in lamb *chops*, is an acronym we gradually developed to help remember 10 general categories of stress common to those in ministry overseas. We have included this inventory below (see Figure 1 on the next page) and use it regularly as a member care tool as we work with mission personnel. It can help us deal with the stress-producing "wolves" of missionary life.

Applications

Read through the 10 categories, and then write down some of the stressors that you have experienced over the past several months. Put these in a column labeled "Struggles." In a second column, "Successes," list some of the helpful ways you have dealt with stress during the last several months. Finally, under a "Strategies" column, jot down some of your ideas for better managing stress in the future. Discuss your responses with a friend who can listen well and support you.

It is important also to identify and discuss the stressors that affect families, teams, departments, the region, and the overall agency itself. The inventory, if completed and discussed once a year, for example, is a useful means to understand and minimize stress at various levels of the ministry organization. As we deal with the stressors, we need to be reminded of Luke 12:32, "Do not fear, little flock, because your Father is pleased to give you the kingdom."

Some Questions

Stress is the response of the whole person to the internal and external demands that we experience. The following questions will help you become more familiar with how stress affects you. They will also help you look at some ways that you can deal with stress. Respond to each of the five questions below, and then discuss them as a group. What insights can you gain from one another?

1. How do you know when you are experiencing stress? What signals do you receive from your body, behavior, and emotions?

2. How does stress affect your interpersonal relationships?

3. When was the last time you went through a significant period of stress? What was it like? Briefly describe it.

4. There are at least 25 different things recorded in the Gospels that Jesus did to manage stress—to deal with the wolves and potential wolves of His ministry. How many can you identify?

5. What helps you to deal with stress, keep your life in balance, and keep the "wolves" at bay? What does not help?

Figure 1
CHOPS Inventory of Stressors

Category	Description	Struggles	Successes	Strategies
Cultural	Getting your needs met in unfamiliar ways: language learning, culture shock, reentry.			
Crises	Potentially traumatic events, often unexpected: natural disasters, wars, accidents, political instability.			
Historical	Unresolved past areas of personal struggle: family-of-origin issues, personal weaknesses.			
Human	Relationships with family members, colleagues, nationals: raising children, couple conflict, struggles with team members, social opposition.			
Occupational	Job-specific challenges and pressures: workload, travel schedule, exposure to people with problems, job satisfaction, more training, government "red tape."			
Organizational	Incongruity between one's background and the organizational ethos: differing with company policies, work style, expectations.			
Physical	Overall health and factors that affect it: nutrition, climate, illness, aging, environment.			
Psychological	Overall emotional stability and self-esteem: loneliness, frustration, depression, unwanted habits, developmental issues/ stage-of-life issues.			
Support	Resources to sustain one's work: finances, housing, clerical and technical help, donor contact.			
Spiritual	Relationship with the Lord: devotional life, subtle temptations, time with other believers, spiritual warfare.			

Answers apply to (circle): self, spouse, child, friend, department, team, company.

4.
Folly From Flies

Behind many of our inner struggles are attempts to deny who we really are or to be something that we are not. Personal problems often stem from efforts to escape from legitimate suffering.

Many cross-cultural workers live in places where flies are common. So it's not too unusual, say, to find a fly in one's glass of water, which I did one hot and humid day in Thailand. Maybe the fly was just going for a swim, I told myself. Or maybe this is someone else's glass. Yet there I was, sitting with 40 expatriate leaders around several tables in a conference room, discussing work strategies and praying. This was the first time I had been invited to be part of this group, and I was feeling, well, rather special. Everything was fine, except for that wee pest in my glass.

Contamination From Flies

Quickly I flashed back to my morning devotions, pondering the verse I had meditated upon that would help me make sense out of my unsolicited visitor: "Dead flies cause the ointment of the perfumer to putrefy and send forth a vile odor; so does a little folly (in him who is valued for wisdom) outweigh wisdom and honor" (Eccl. 10:1, Amplified). The application to me was apparent.

Was I fancying myself to be just a bit too special by virtue of my inclusion now as a "leader"? You bet. And this attitude was folly. Talk about starting out on the wrong foot! Or the wrong fly! Moreover, I knew from past experience that this attitude would eventually contaminate the fragrance of Christ in my life and work (2 Cor. 2:15), just as dead flies putrefy precious perfume. This special envoy had done its job by getting my attention!

Characteristics of Flies

No one deliberately adds flies, be they dead or alive, to valuable perfume. The two are incongruous. Likewise, few of us deliberately try to pollute our own lives. Yet like flies in perfume, our folly—our sin—can alight in our souls and wreak havoc on our wisdom, honor, and work. A little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough, as Paul says (1 Cor. 5:6).

Some types of folly are more damaging than others. A few household flies, for instance, will only pester us. They are a nuisance. Think of these, analogously, as things like unwanted habits in our life and minor character weaknesses of which we are trying to rid ourselves. But lots of flies, especially those that can bite, sting, and carry diseases, could really hurt us. Think of these as serious folly: unconfessed sin, unrecognized arrogance, hidden compulsive addictions, and pervasive personality patterns that are unhealthy/unholy.

Have you ever noticed how just one public or even private manifestation of such serious folly—these wrong behaviors and attitudes—can neutralize our work effectiveness, compromise our integrity, destabilize our emotional life, and hurt others? "Wisdom is better than weapons of war, but one sinner destroys much good" (Eccl. 9:18). This is true even for Christian sinners!

Folly from flies comes in different frequencies and intensities. It can involve one-time events, in which we recognize the problem and then learn our lesson quickly. We can brush away such flies fairly easily. Folly can also take the form of intermittent events, which can be hard to predict and which seemingly just creep up on us. Additionally, folly can involve ongoing events in our lives, marked by a serious lack of self-control. These can feel like a host of flies swarming around us.

The bottom line is that folly, in whatever form, leads to disgrace. Just a bit of it is all it takes to damage our reputation—and God's—no matter how virtuous our life or noteworthy our accomplishments. Disgrace results not only from the actual content of the folly (e.g., rash words, questionable financial dealings, physical or emotional affairs). It can also come in the aftermath of our inappropriate actions. Instead of availing ourselves of God's

grace, we deny or minimize our problem/sin, or we refuse to believe in God's restorative desire to forgive us and help us in our time of need (Heb. 4:16). Think of the latter as falling into "dis-grace."

Spotting Flies

It often takes an outside source, such as a close friend, the Word of God, or the Holy Spirit, to help us recognize the flies in our life. One of the biggest sources of folly is not to be in regular contact with these three "fly spotting" sources! Let's give names to some of the more common flies. Sin—as in the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and pride (1 John 2:15-16)—takes many winged forms!

- **Hidden addictions** (*mosca compulsiva*). These are closet compulsions that affect our time, judgment, and relationships. After awhile, you can smell their stench, even though they may be covered up at first. Excessive behaviors involving exercise, sun-tanning, over/undereating, preoccupation with one's appearance/body, procrastination, withdrawing, shopping, TV watching, Internet use, etc., are all part of this. We sedate and stimulate ourselves in many ways, in order to avoid seeing ourselves clearly and dealing directly with problems. Major addictions, such as pornography, gambling, and drug dependence, are even more crippling.
- **Bitterness** (*mosca vinegari*). Henri Nouwen has observed that in this life, "Love and wounds are never separated." We hurt those we love and vice versa. Working through such hurts and forgiving, though challenging, is certainly more desirable than the alternative: harboring the hurt and developing a pervasive, entrenched bitterness that can defile our souls and those of others (Heb. 12:15). Forgiveness, an act of mercy which pardons others for specific offenses, is the only sure antidote for such bitterness.
- **Improper comments** (*mosca maximus moutha*). Our mouths are sources of honor and embarrassment for us. Surely no one can tame the tongue (James 3:8). Some of our greatest verbal faux pas include making hasty, inappropriate promises, especially to God (Prov. 20:25; Eccl. 5:1-7); spewing out "brain sludge"—nonsensical things, questionable stories or jokes, or coarse jesting that does not edify (Eph. 4:3-4); gossip, which involves repeating a matter that unfairly or unnecessarily damages other people; and insensitive (poorly timed and overly harsh) criticism.
- **Arrogance** (*mosca maximus rex*). Some of us need and like to be leaders—admired, in control, taking charge, leading the way. How easy it is to be seduced by our positions of influence, and our desires to be important. Inflated pride and self-aggrandizement are two of life's greatest dangers. They are the insidious winged companions of those who believe that they are more special than they really are, and that their success has come more through their own efforts than through God's favor and anointing (Deut. 8:17).
- **Personal flies** (*mosca mia perpetua*). The list of flies that can plague us is almost endless. Can you identify any flies, dead or alive, floating in the waters of your soul?

Swatting Flies

How do we rid ourselves of such fallacious menaces? It can be tricky. And it is a process. We hit some, and we miss some. The first line of defense is to proactively attend to our personal growth: staying close to the Lord, in touch with ourselves, aware of the influence of our surroundings, and connected with confidants.

When flies do come around, they are best dealt with through honestly admitting their existence and impact (*confession*), choosing to make serious changes and amends in order to limit their influence (*repentance/restitution*), and getting ongoing supportive input from others to help us deal with them (*accountability*). Guidance from the Holy Spirit, trusted friends, Scripture meditation, counseling, and a good support group or "12 Steps" program are all important sources of help, especially for dealing with some of the

more lethal varieties of flies. Confession, repentance/restitution, and accountability are like strands of the three-fold cord that is not easily broken (Eccl. 4:12). We can use this cord to knit a protective fabric which, like a mosquito net, can keep the folly out and, like a safety net, can catch us if we fall.

We often wish to experience in this life what we can only experience in heaven. We ache for something more—to be clothed with the immortal. We yearn for our personal flies to leave us permanently. Even after experiencing the best that this life has to offer, we are still left with a deep longing for wholeness and a desire to be clothed with that which will never fade. Yet as Larry Crabb (1988) tells us, the aching soul is not evidence of emotional problems, but a sign of our facing reality. It is a sign of health.

In closing, let's consider Christ's words to Peter right before Gethsemane. "Simon, Simon, behold Satan has demanded permission to sift you (plural) like wheat; but I have prayed for you (singular) that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned, strengthen your brothers" (Luke 22:31-32, NASB). Note that this is a prediction primarily of Peter's faithfulness, not of his failure. I believe the Lord sees us much in the same way, as we struggle through areas of folly. He sees the potential in us. And in spite of our weaknesses, He still entrusts us, as He did Peter, to feed His sheep and to be His faithful and refreshing fragrance among the nations (John 21).

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Sexual Purity In Missions

KEN WILLIAMS

"It is God's will that you should be sanctified:
that you should avoid sexual immorality;
that each of you should learn to control his own body
in a way that is holy and honorable."
1 Thessalonians 4:3-4

We all are aware of cases of moral failure among missionaries. And how disheartening this can be for all of us, especially when it happens to close colleagues. The church in Western societies has been so inundated with sexual stimuli that what was once seen as grossly inappropriate, pornographic, and shameful is now treated as more or less "normal" and acceptable. This proliferation of distorted human sexuality is a prime tool which Satan, the enemy of our souls, is using against people in general, the church, and the missions community in particular. No longer limited to subtle temptations, he now blatantly tempts us to immorality in ways that would have been ineffective only a few years ago.

Being sexual and sane these days is no easy thing. Each of us is responsible for who we are as sexual beings. This means that at times and as Christians, we must acknowledge our sexual issues or struggles, as well as engage personally in spiritual warfare to resist Satan's sexual temptations. We are also called to help others effectively do battle in this arena.

In this chapter, I would like to remind us that as missionaries we are as vulnerable to sexual sin as anyone else. I will briefly explain the dynamics of sexual temptation and will give some ideas for developing a personal strategy for maintaining moral purity. I have also included two brief self-assessment tools on maintaining sexual purity.

Healthy sexuality is a significant issue anywhere these days. Missionaries can expect to be challenged in this area as they follow the biblical guidelines/admonitions to live sensible and holy lives (Titus 2:11-15). Here are several practical strategies and tools for remaining pure in missions and for avoiding the snares of the Evil One.

Although this article does not specifically address adolescent MKs and sexuality matters, this is of course a critical issue. Missionary parents and educators may want to use this article with adolescent MKs to help them in their sexual journey into adulthood.

Be Aware of the Danger

We need to be just as concerned about understanding the normal and healthy aspects of human sexuality as we are about its potential dangers and downside. What a powerful and lovely gift we have from our Creator! An article of this nature could lead us to the false assumption that sexual feelings in themselves are evil. However, let us remember that sex was God's idea, created by Him before the fall (see Gen. 2:18-25). My perspective in this article is to focus more on safeguarding ourselves from the negative consequences of inappropriate sexual expression and temptation, especially in light of how Satan can use these things to attack us.

The first step in resisting temptation is to be aware of Satan's strategies. Paul spoke of being alert, "in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes" (2 Cor. 2:11). Let us be aware of Satan's schemes for trying to destroy God's work. One of his primary strategies is to convince us that we could never sink so low as to commit sexual sin.

Missionaries often face special issues that make them vulnerable to sexual temptation. Carefully consider the specific factors in your situation that may hinder your ability to resist. These may include loneliness, anonymity, unmet emotional needs, greater sexual freedom in the local culture, and loss of support systems such as family, church, and friends. Also, unrelenting stress over long periods of time can undermine our ability to resist temptation.

Sometimes missionaries are more susceptible to sexual temptation because they think that it could never happen to them. They believe the possibility is unthinkable. In counseling several missionaries who had committed adultery or fornication, I found that not one had considered himself or herself vulnerable to immorality.

You are probably well acquainted with 1 Corinthians 10:13, and you claim its precious promises: "No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, He will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it." But do you also know and apply the preceding verse? "So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!" The Holy Spirit gave us this stern warning immediately before the promises, and both must be taken together. We cannot safely rest in God's promise of help in temptation, if we naively think we can stand without taking great care.

We need to face the facts. Each one of us is vulnerable to sexual temptation, no matter what our age, marital status, or maturity. You may be tempted to indulge in pornography. The worldwide availability of pornography on the Internet poses a relatively new and powerful temptation to missionaries, especially men. Not long ago, Focus on the Family reported that the number one reason pastors and their spouses called their hotline for help was addiction to pornography on the Internet!

Or you may find yourself tempted to "play games" with persons to whom you are attracted, without actual sexual involvement. These games can take many forms—flirting, showing special interest, touching more than is appropriate, engaging in too much eye contact, spending a lot of time together, joking about being in love, etc. While these things may not be sinful in themselves, they can put us and others in danger.

Many missionaries struggle with severe temptations to commit adultery, fornication, homosexual acts, and even incest or child molestation. Tragically, some of them succumb. What about you? Will you be one of those who end up as a lamb in Satan's slaughterhouse? Or will you walk in the

power of the Holy Spirit, aware of the dangers and prepared to victoriously do battle with the forces of evil?

Understand the Dynamics of Sexual Temptation

Many missionaries do not understand the powerful dynamics of sexual temptation. As you understand these dynamics, you are able to recognize forces and processes within you and take action to resist them. Here are a few principles to keep in mind:

1. We don't fall into sin; we slide into it. When someone commits sexual sin, we tend to think of that person as suddenly falling off the cliff into an abyss. This is rarely, if ever, the case. An act of sexual sin is the ultimate and logical result of long-term habit patterns of giving in to temptations to less obvious sins. According to our Lord, sexual sin originates in the heart (Matt. 15:19). The embers of adultery may smolder in the heart for months or even years before they burst into the flame of action. See Matthew 5:8, 28; 12:35-36; Proverbs 4:23; 6:18; 23:26-28.

2. The beginnings of the slide into immorality often seem so harmless that we may not even be aware of them. We live in a sex-saturated world. Each time we are exposed to a TV program, movie, magazine, or pornography on the Internet that appeals even slightly to sexual desires that are inappropriate, a powerful, unconscious process evolves. The process is often so slow and subtle that we are rarely aware of what is happening; but as the years pass, our hatred of sexual sin is gradually lost. In fact, the process has been going on in our society long enough that many young Christians have never developed that abhorrence. And so the seeds of personal sexual sin have been sown deep in the hearts of most of us, without our even realizing it.

3. Our capacity for self-deceit is virtually limitless, according to Jeremiah 17:9. Being a missionary does not diminish this capacity! While we rejoice in God's indwelling power over sin, we must be constantly aware of the power of our hearts to deceive us. If we fail to accept this difficult truth about ourselves, we stand in great danger of sexual sin. As a counselor, I know of no area in which the power of self-deceit is stronger than in the sexual area. Most of us know of believers who tried to continue serving God while living in secret immorality and who "repented" only after getting caught. See 1 Corinthians 3:18, Galatians 6:7-8, Ephesians 5:6, James 1:22, and 1 John 1:8.

4. Close personal relationships are vital in the Christian life. God created us with legitimate needs for intimacy, and to deny these needs may make us even more vulnerable to sexual temptation. For married persons, intimacy with one's spouse must be primary, of course. But married and single persons alike need healthy, godly relationships with others. Intimacy and sexuality are not the same. A healthy, biblical view of loving intimacy allows us to relate in mutually upbuilding ways without romantic or sexual involvement. Read through the Gospels to see Jesus' model in His close friendships.

5. Intimate relationships often provide serious temptation to sin, and so they must be handled with great care and awareness of their dangers. Most missionaries slide into sexual sin through relationships that begin quite harmlessly and even out of righteous motives. The process usually develops in these stages:

- A man and woman are brought together naturally through work, common interests, or ministry.
- They begin to spend more time together, especially more time alone.
- One or both begin to have deep emotional and/or spiritual needs met in the relationship.
- At some point, they begin to touch each other, sometimes beginning with right motives. But eventually the touching, combined with the meeting of significant needs, generates romantic and/or sexual feelings.

- Powerful self-deception enables them to justify and rationalize what is happening in the relationship.

6. Once we have begun the slide, sexual temptation will probably be the strongest force we will ever experience. Its power can grow to the point that we become willing to give up everything to gratify it: relationship with Christ, spouse and children, home, ministry, reputation, friends, *everything*. And no believer is so spiritual that he or she is immune to its power.

Involvement in pornography is particularly difficult to overcome. When one has become addicted, that is, compulsively drawn to pornographic images time after time and unable to stop, he/she will need help from a colleague, a support group, or a counselor to overcome the pull. No one makes it alone in seeking to recover from addiction.

Masturbation

We Christians are very reluctant to talk about masturbation. This is such a hush-hush topic, but it is so important that I want to address it briefly. It is one of those issues with which most people, Christian or not, have struggled or are struggling. Yet convictions of its sinfulness or lack of sinfulness are held very strongly. My purpose is neither to justify it as always OK, nor condemn it as always a terrible sin. As far as I can discover, the Bible never mentions masturbation, while it does mention virtually every sexual act that is sinful.

In giving five "indisputable facts," Richard Foster (1985) summarizes the issue of masturbation in his book *Money, Sex, and Power* far better than I could: "First, masturbation is not physically harmful in any way.... Second, the Bible nowhere deals directly with masturbation.... But sexual desire also needs to be controlled, which leads us to a third affirmation: the more masturbation tends toward obsession, the more it tends toward idolatry.... A fourth affirmation: masturbation's sexual fantasies are a very real part of human life that needs to be disciplined, not eliminated.... The final thing we should say about masturbation is that, although it may electrify, it can never fully satisfy." See Foster's complete discussion for further treatment of the subject. Randy Alcorn (1985) also provides a helpful chapter on this topic in *Christians in the Wake of the Sexual Revolution*.

Build a Strategy for Ongoing Moral Purity

Here are 11 principles to help you develop a strategy for avoiding sexual sin:

1. Accept your personal vulnerability to immorality, and continue to grow in understanding your own personal responses to the dynamics of sexual temptation.

2. If married, make your relationship with your spouse a high priority. Do not let the stresses of life rob you of the rich, satisfying relationship God wants for you, according to Proverbs 5:18-20.

3. Make a list of sinful practices in which you are or have been involved. These may include thoughts, fantasies, feelings, and actions which stimulate or gratify you sexually but which you know are sinful. Then add to the list seemingly harmless practices in which you engage but which you know do not contribute to a holy life. These might include thoughts, fantasies, and feelings which are less explicit than those you first listed. They may also include TV programs and magazines which are not overtly pornographic but which you know appeal to the flesh. These activities may be permissible according to 1 Corinthians 6:12, but in time you can be enslaved to them, without even realizing it. They cause you to set your mind on the flesh rather than on the Spirit, as described in Romans 8:5.

4. Make a commitment to Jesus Christ and to your spouse, if married, to live a holy life free from sexual sin, even those sins that seem to be harmless. Write down your commitment and keep it where you will see it often. This is a com-

mitment that must be continually reaffirmed, sometimes on a moment-by-moment basis.

5. Make a lifelong project of studying, memorizing, meditating on, and applying Scriptures which speak to this area of life. See Psalm 119:9, 11. A few key passages in this area are Proverbs 5; 6:20-35; Romans 6; 1 Corinthians 6:12-20; Ephesians 5:3-12; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8. God's Word must be a major part of your strategy.

6. Rigorously practice Colossians 3:5. "Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires...." Also see Ephesians 4:22. Ask God to forgive you and to cleanse you of any practices you listed under point 3 above. Then seek to achieve freedom from those things. This process will take time, and, being human, you will probably fail at times. But don't give up in discouragement! Satan will try to convince you that it's hopeless—that you will never make significant progress.

Timing is critical. When you are first aware of being tempted, reaffirm your commitment to Christ and to putting your earthly nature to death. In this battle, even a few seconds of wavering or inaction can make the difference between victory and defeat (Eccl. 8:11).

7. Continually work on being renewed in your mind, as described in Colossians 3:10 and Ephesians 4:23-24. This involves a commitment that must be reaffirmed often, especially when you first become aware of temptation. Scripture explains the process of being renewed in our minds in different ways, so that we are able to understand it fully. Study this process in the Word, beginning with Romans 8:5-8, 12:1-3, Philippians 4:4-8, Colossians 3:1-4, and 1 Peter 1:13-17.

8. Develop a relationship of mutual accountability. We cannot hope to handle sexual temptation effectively alone. In fact, God didn't design us to survive alone in this spiritual battle. Hebrews 3:12-13 indicates that we need close personal interaction with others in order not to be "hardened by sin's deceitfulness."

It can be very difficult to "confess your sins to each other and pray for each other" (James 5:16). Yet every one of us needs to do this very thing regularly. Nothing will cause an illicit attraction or fantasy to shatter in pieces as much as sharing it with a praying friend. Specific details need not normally be shared.

9. Develop your own "early warning system" to detect the first signs of temptation. Christians often slide into sexual sin without being aware of temptation until it is too late. Romans 6:12 warns us that we can become slaves to sin and lose our freedom to obey God. If you are married, the slightest physical or emotional attraction to a person of the opposite sex should be dealt with immediately through prayer, application of God's Word, and mutual accountability.

10. Know and avoid your danger zones. The situations in which we put ourselves greatly affect our vulnerability to sexual temptation. To do battle effectively in this area, we need to know the situations that are dangerous to us. Then we must avoid them when possible. If that isn't possible, we need to plan ahead for spiritual warfare and take whatever steps are necessary to insure victory. Here are a few examples of possible danger zones:

- Traveling alone, especially overseas.
- Working alone with someone of the opposite sex.
- Counseling or praying alone with someone of the opposite sex.
- Meeting with a person of the opposite sex in a room where no one can see in.
- Getting so over-stressed that the ability to fight temptation is diminished.

11. Understand cultural cues. If you are in another culture, learn which cues signal moral looseness and which signal moral purity. Here are four questions to ask:

- What cues signal that a person is moral?
- What cues signal that a person is not interested in another person?
- What cues signal that a person is immoral?
- What cues signal that a person is interested in another person?

Be very careful to avoid immoral cues, and practice those which signal an unwillingness to become involved in illicit relationships.

Conclusion

Sexual immorality is not the unforgivable sin. Forgiveness and healing are available through the blood of Christ. If you have been or are now caught up in immorality, you can experience God's forgiveness and cleansing through confession and repentance. But to commit sexual immorality may be the most excruciatingly destructive experience that can happen in anyone's life and ministry. Begin today to build your personal strategy for a lifetime of moral purity, knowing that you will battle great temptations along the way.

Reflection and Discussion

Go through the worksheet in Appendix 1 below, "How Am I Maintaining Moral Purity?" Consider doing this exercise with a close friend (same gender), accountability group, or spouse. The second appendix is similar and is intended for use by individuals and couples.

Appendix 1
How Am I Maintaining Moral Purity?

Use the following scale to indicate your responses:
1 = Rarely; 2 = Occasionally; 3 = Sometimes; 4 = Often; 5 = Nearly always

____ 1. I am consciously aware of my vulnerability to sexual sin.

____ 2. I have definite standards as to what I watch, listen to, and read, and I am careful to live by these standards.

____ 3. I am careful about how I touch people of the opposite sex.

____ 4. I meet with an accountability partner or partners regularly.

____ 5. My actions show that I am a moral person in whatever culture I'm in.

____ 6. When tempted to lust after someone, I "take captive" those thoughts and feelings, so that they "obey Christ."

____ 7. I refrain from flirting.

____ 8. I refuse to be entertained by anything that offends God.

____ 9. If I feel attracted to someone, I am extremely careful to act in ways that will suppress emotional involvement on the part of both of us.

____ 10. If I must go into morally high-risk situations, I consciously recognize the risk before I go there, and I plan on steps to protect myself.

____ 11. When I become aware that I am on the slide toward immorality, I take immediate steps to move back toward purity.

____ 12. I dress in such a way as to demonstrate my commitment to morality, both in my culture and in other cultures.

____ 13. I do whatever I can to see that my legitimate emotional needs are met in godly, healthy ways.

____ 14. I meditate on Scriptures that encourage me and strengthen me in maintaining moral purity.

____ 15. I maintain a love relationship with Christ that is so strong that engaging in any kind of immorality is abhorred.

Appendix 2
Maintaining Moral Purity: Opportunities for Growth

Here are some questions for prayerful reflection. Review these, and write an action plan.

Individual Issues

1. How would I describe my vulnerability to sexual temptation at this time in my life?
   a. What factors are helping me to remain pure?
   b. What factors are making it difficult for me to remain pure?
2. Am I on the slide toward immorality?
   a. Where am I now compared to five years ago? A year ago? Six months ago?
   b. What, if anything, do I need to do in order to move back toward complete purity?
3. Is there anyone with whom I am involved in the five stages toward immorality? (See point 5 under "Understand the Dynamics of Sexual Temptation.")
   a. If so, who is it?
   b. At what stage am I?
   c. What do I plan to do about it? When?
4. What does my strategy for moral purity look like right now?
   a. What aspects do I now practice?
   b. What have I stopped practicing that I used to do? What do I want to do about these things?
   c. What new things do I want to add to my strategy? When will I add them?
5. What Scriptures have I memorized in this area?
   a. How often do I review them?
   b. What new "battle passages" do I want to add to my arsenal?
   c. Memorize one of the following Scripture passages: 1 Corinthians 6:18-20, 2 Corinthians 7:1, or Ephesians 5:3-5.

Married Couple Issues

1. Talk through the individual issues with your spouse.
2. What is going on in our lives and marriage that is helping us remain morally pure?
3. What is going on right now that makes it difficult to remain pure?
4. How free are we to talk about sexual temptation and other moral issues? What do we want to do to grow in this area?

5. What can we do to make it easier for us to keep our purity?
6. In what ways can we enhance our love for each other at this time in our lives?
7. How are we doing at meeting each other's needs? Emotional needs? Physical needs? Spiritual needs? How can we do better?
8. What does our strategy for moral purity *as a couple* look like? What specifically can we do to make our strategy more effective?
9. What else do we want to say to each other or ask of each other in this area?

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Surviving War As a Caregiver: A Personal Account

PAULA O'KEEFE

This is the story of how the author, along with several Christian friends, persevered in the midst of the horrors and privations of war. Inner struggles, especially the struggle to trust God, were as real as the external threats of loss of life. The names and places in this country have been changed for security reasons.

Standing on the balcony at the top of the United Nations building in Vilt, I looked down at the 10 floors beneath me and thought how easy it would be to end it all. Everything within me was longing for an escape from the horrors I had seen, the pain, the despair, and the hopelessness; longing to find a safe place where I would not be misunderstood but be accepted for who I was; longing to find peace and rest. It seemed that everyone and everything had turned against me, and I was only able to survive by clinging to the knowledge that God was for me and still had things He wanted me to do for Him.

That morning, I had awakened early from a deep sleep to the sounds of a thunderstorm reverberating through the mountains. The terror and panic that had seized my body the split second I awoke eased a little as I realized it wasn't another bombing raid. I realized how tense I was even as I slept. I tried to go back to sleep again, but the adrenaline surge that had rushed through my body made it impossible. I tried not to think about my friend, Aishad, who had been raped a few weeks previously. An armed neighbor had forced his way into the apartment I shared with her, when she had been alone one night. I also felt sick with utter helplessness as I thought of Valera, our worship leader, who had been forced off a train by armed soldiers. We hadn't had any information as to his whereabouts since he had been taken, and no one seemed interested in helping us find him: not government officials, fellow missionaries, or believers. I tried not to think about the pain of our recent church split, brought on largely because of these tragedies; nevertheless, sleep eluded me.

Later in the morning, I went to the United Nations building to receive my email from a mission organization lo-

cated in that building. Receiving news from the outside world was usually an exciting occasion. I had no idea that such a blow was coming. I don't think that any of the terrible things I had been through in the past few weeks would have made me feel suicidal, had I had the support I needed. What topped it all off was the email I received from my pastor back home, suggesting that I was in some way responsible for the church split and the disappearance of Valera. Looking back, I can see how he had come to that conclusion. I had not personally been in contact with him for a few weeks. He had only heard an unfavorable report about what I was doing from another missionary in the area. This missionary not only did not know all the facts involved, but for some reason did not like what I was doing and seemed to be deliberately trying to stir trouble. But I was doing the best I knew how to at the time, in a very difficult situation, and I was on the verge of exhaustion. At that point, all I needed was someone to listen to me, encourage me, and support me.

I was in my mid-20s and had been working in a war zone for about a year when this happened. I was the only foreigner from my mission working there, although I did have a team of locals working with me. Because I was sent out by a faith mission based in my home church, I did not receive a salary or a regular income. Most of the money I received came from the gifts of friends or supporters, plus a small amount from fundraising appeals. I didn't have any set dates as to when I should be in the war zone or when to take holidays or furlough, so I was free to do what I felt was right. This freedom was good in many ways, but because of my tendency towards workaholism, it had inadvertently allowed me to work too hard and to stop looking after myself properly.

I had experienced firsthand some of the horrors of living in a 20th century war zone, although I had been fortunate enough to have missed the worst horrors of full-blown war. Each time the war had flared up, I had been out of the immediate line of combat. Sometimes I had wished that I had been there, as the agony of waiting and praying and not knowing what was happening to the people I loved at times seemed worse than actually being there with them. But it was in the Lord's hands, and He had, so far, chosen to spare me those horrors. I had, however, witnessed firsthand some of the violence and lawlessness, and I had had friends raped, beaten, robbed, and kidnapped. I had been in life-threatening situations, and while each time I had watched the deliverance of God, I had not realized the toll it had been taking on my body, soul, and spirit. The deprivations that ensued as a secondary result of war had also unwittingly worn me down. Over an extended period, things such as often having to go without electricity, gas, and running water, carrying buckets of water long distances, not getting enough sleep, not being able to get warm or have a proper bath, having no telephone lines and therefore no contact with the outside world—all these were a constant strain.

I was on the verge of breakdown, but I seemed unable to help myself. As I stood feeling so utterly desperate on the top of the United Nations building, God was very gracious to me. He prompted the missionary whose computer I had used to get my email to come out onto the balcony and ask me how I was doing. I told her about how devastated I felt, and she was so encouraging and supportive. She gave me a hug and prayed with me, and then she invited me to come to her apartment and rest for a few days. Although she and her husband lived quite basically compared to the West, it was like a luxury five-star hotel for me. They treated me like a queen, giving me a room to myself, with a TV and videos. I was able to sleep in during the mornings and just rest and have some time to myself while they were at work. In the evenings, they cooked me delicious meals, listened to me, prayed with me, and just were there for me. They even tried to help me find out some information about

Valera, our worship leader. After a few days with them, I felt able to carry on. I am so grateful to the Lord for sending them to me in my moment of need and for giving me that place of peace, safety, and rest that I was so longing for.

What Have I Learned? What Can Others Learn?

It was a combination of factors, over an extended period of time, which led me to the verge of breakdown. As I share my experiences and what I have learned from them, I hope they may outline some of the pressures that missionaries living in war zones face. I also hope to show how I think missionaries can be better supported and how they can better support themselves. Many of the things that God has taught me are very basic. I have known most of them in my head for a long time, but it was only as God showed me the truth of them in reality and spoke deep into my spirit that I have been able to put them into practice.

My Humanity

I have realized that living in a war zone is hard for anyone to deal with, but when you are a missionary, an added complication is the fact that people often expect you to be superhuman, to have no needs of your own, and always to be there for them. This expectation has often led me to do far too much, to have no regard for my own needs, and to push down my own feelings constantly for the sake of others. After all, it seems to be the Christian thing to do, since Jesus did command us to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. But I am not superhuman. I am a woman with emotions and needs, and I needed to have someone with whom I could share my heart.

Support From One's Pastor and Church

Why had the email I received from my pastor been so devastating to me? I think it was because it had come at such a difficult time and had made me feel misunderstood, rejected, and alone in the world. It really hurt that my church had believed what someone else had said about me, without hearing my side of the story. They seemed not to believe in me or understand how much I was struggling and needed their support. I sent my pastor a reply to his email, explaining what had been going on from my perspective, and I received a nice email back from him saying that he wanted to let me know that he was supporting me and was on my side. It was very important for me to hear that. I needed him to stand up for me and let me know that he was on my side.

Good Communication

In order to survive in a war zone, a missionary needs to have an adequate support base and good "covering." My understanding of covering is that we all need to have people who are spiritually in authority over us, to whom we are accountable. Usually these are the people who have sent us out. Their role is pastoral. Just as a shepherd cares for his sheep, so the people covering us should be strengthening and encouraging us, binding us up when we are injured, and bringing us back when we are straying (as in Ezekiel 34). They should be keeping watch over us as people who must give an account (Heb. 13:17).

Because missionaries are physically so far away from their home church or mission, they really need to know that they have this support and covering, through letters/emails and occasional phone calls. They need to know that their home church or mission is 100% behind them, praying for them and interested in their well-being. The missionary also, of course, has a responsibility to keep the people back home informed as to what is happening. I had fallen down a bit in that area, as I was spending so much time without telephone or email contact. I learned that to be accountable, I needed to really make an effort to keep in closer contact. Being a missionary can be a very lonely place, with-

out the added pain of feeling misunderstood and unsupported.

A Good Local Team and Confidant

Another reason that I felt so desperate was that I did not feel I had anyone with whom I could really share my heart. Having a good team around you, be they locals or foreigners, is extremely important, to encourage and support one another. When you have needs, you have someone with whom you can share and ask for help and prayer. I think that in order to survive, any missionary needs to have at least one confidant. At that time, I felt that I could not share my heart with any of the locals. I had no foreigners working with me, and at times I felt the need to be able to talk to someone who could really understand what it was like to be a foreigner in this situation. The Lord knew what I needed at that moment of feeling so desperate; He blessed me with that missionary couple with whom I was able to share my heart.

Debriefing

Engaging in debriefing, where we can talk to someone about the experiences we have been through and be listened to, is essential. It is very easy to push down our emotions when we go through traumatic experiences and to think that the events have not affected us. It is true that while going through such an experience, we may need to suppress our emotions in order to survive, but as soon afterwards as possible, we need to find a safe place where we can express these emotions and give them to God. I found that I thought I had not been affected by many of the things I had been through. I assumed that since I was a Christian and since I had chosen to serve the Lord in that place and since God was with me, He had protected me. Of course, He had protected me, but as a human being I needed to deal with the emotions and the consequences of the traumatic experiences I'd had, if I was to emerge unscathed. God has helped me to do this through the help of counselors back home in the UK, who have spent many hours listening to me and praying with me.

The Invasion—and More Lessons

There were, of course, other factors leading me to the verge of breakdown. The weeks and months leading up to this incident had been stressful. The first war had officially ended the year before, when the enemy tanks had pulled out, leaving the locals to govern their own affairs. It was a time of great rejoicing, but it was followed by much heartache, which was exacerbated by the lawlessness that ensued for the next three years. About six months prior to the incident at the UN building, we had the terrible news that several aid workers had been killed in their beds in cold blood. Most aid agencies pulled out after that.

I remember that very night I was staying with Hava, a believer from our church, and we had prayed for the country until about 2:00 a.m. I have found that living in a war zone greatly improves your prayer life—hearing shooting and bombing close by causes you to fall to your knees, crying out to God for mercy for the land, in a way that nothing else can do. The next morning, we were awakened by frantic knocking at the door, as the neighbors came to tell us the terrible news. We all crowded around the TV set, and for the short time that we had electricity, we all sat and cried together—locals (both Muslims and Christians) and one English missionary. We were horrified by the futility of it all. We heard the President of the invading army declaring that if the lawlessness didn't stop, he would send in the tanks again. Then the electricity was gone, and gone also was our precious contact with the outside world.

I went about my business as usual that day, as any day, although my heart was very

heavy. Hava and I went for water, which we carried up to the fourth floor, where she lived. I then went to buy some bread, tea, and sugar for our breakfast. When I had arrived at Hava's place the night before, she had absolutely nothing at all to eat or drink in the house. She said she was fasting, but I knew that she had no money and no way of getting any money. After our breakfast, we walked to the refugee camp on the outskirts of town, stopping at the market to pick up some food for the camp.

Every week I conducted a Bible study in one of the small metal huts where a family of new believers lived. Zulai had had her fair share of tragedies, but she loved Jesus. Her husband had been gunned down in front of her and their three children, and then their home and all their possessions had been burned. After studying about God's love and then praying for each of them to know God's love in the midst of the storm, we had a time of prayer for peace for their land. Afterwards, we enjoyed the tea and treats that I had brought with me, and then I went to different huts to visit other precious people whom I had come to love so dearly. As I drank tea, I listened to their stories, prayed with them, and was a shoulder for them to cry on. It was always a special time in the camp, but I often came away feeling absolutely drained.

After leaving the camp, I walked to a friend's house. She was not yet a believer but was very interested in knowing more about Jesus. She was not in when I arrived, but since I needed to see her, I waited. By the time she arrived home, it was 3:30 p.m. and was beginning to get dark. I would have had to leave then if I was to make the hour-long walk home before curfew. I decided to spend the night. We talked for hours about the Bible, Jesus, and the power of forgiveness—a totally new concept to my friend and her family. They had grown up with the idea of blood revenge being the norm.

Fellowship With God or With Fear?

Before going to bed, we watched the news, where they announced that nearly all aid agencies had pulled out, and it really looked as if full-blown war would start again at any moment. The terror of the situation hit me. I assumed that I was the only foreigner left in the country, which sent chills running down my spine. If the fighting started that night, I had many reasons to be fearful: I was staying downtown, and not only would I have been right in the center of the fighting, but I would also not have been with the people I would choose to be with during a bombing campaign, that is, my Christian friends. I went to bed, and the terror felt like a lead weight lodged in the pit of my stomach. I could not sleep.

I wrestled for a couple of hours, and I felt the Lord telling me I had a choice: I could either dwell on the fear and thus in a sense "fellowship" with it, or I could choose to fellowship with Him. It was something I had remembered hearing from a missionary in Burundi when she was talking about how God had helped her deal with fear during the war there. I knew that if God could help her, then He could help me too. I asked Him to help me to fellowship with Him, and an incredible sense of peace descended on me. I felt Him telling me that I would be okay and that He was still calling me to serve Him there, even though nearly all other agencies had pulled out. I eventually fell asleep, to the sounds of gunfire resounding not too far away, resting in the safety and security of my Savior's arms.

Time With God

I have learned how very important it is to have regular times alone with the Lord. This can be quite difficult in a war zone. Firstly, it can be hard just to find some time alone. Where I worked, it was too dangerous for a foreigner to live alone, especially a female, so I lived with locals. In every family, there is a lot of overcrowding, be-

cause of the many refugees and destroyed homes. There are no places in the town or in the countryside where it would be safe to go by myself, sit down, and enjoy some time with the Lord. Then there is the difficulty of trying to relax, when I can hear shooting in the background. So it can be a problem. But if I don't have those times with the Lord, then I would not be able to survive.

I found that I did not actually need a quiet place to spend time with God, because I could fellowship with Him wherever I was and whatever I was doing. I needed times of just being with Him, to get my focus and perspective right and to know His love and favor upon me. Every day I need to receive the new mercies that He has for me. I need to be able to come to that place of refuge and safety, where I can rest in His arms and find the peace and joy that I could not find anywhere else. Spending time with Him is the anchor I need to weather any storms I may have to go through that day.

The House Church Episode

A few days before I visited Vilt, about six months after the aid workers had been killed, we were having our weekly church meeting. We were an "underground" church and met in various homes, usually on Fridays or Saturdays. I went to the meeting via the market to pick up some food for the family in whose house we were meeting that week, as well as some tea, sugar, and cakes to enjoy after the meeting.

When I arrived, I found Nadia, the mother, in a terrible state. She was chopping an onion, and with each violent chop of the knife, she talked about killing herself or killing her son. She was a single mother who had had two alcoholic husbands. She was now on her own with her four children. Her eldest daughter was pregnant; while on a night shift during a period of heavy bombing, she had been raped by a work colleague. Often when I came, I would find that this family had hardly anything to eat. During periods of relative calm, Nadia worked at the oil refinery, although she hadn't received any wages for months. She was making soup with the two potatoes and one onion she had managed to find. That morning, she had had a fight with her son, and they weren't talking. I managed to get her to calm down before the other believers came. She eventually let me pray with her, and she put down the knife. I didn't know which was worse—the tension in the house or the tension in the country, as people waited wondering when full-blown war would start again, as once again the country was threatened by an imminent enemy invasion.

The first people to arrive at the meeting were a father and son who had been depressed for months. A few months previously, they had been forced to watch the rape of their wife and mother by armed soldiers and then had been severely beaten themselves. The woman had virtually stopped coming out of the house after that and no longer came to church. The next person to arrive at the meeting was the leader of the church, Aishad, with whom I shared an apartment when I was in the country. She seemed to be becoming more anxious and fidgety with each tragedy she experienced, including the murder of her father three years earlier and being raped only a few weeks ago. As we talked about all the terrible things that had been happening, I could feel their fear and despair beginning to come over me.

The absence of half the church, who were no longer joining us for worship, did not help. The Sunday after Aishad had been raped, Vera, a woman to whom Aishad had tearfully confided her secret, totally betrayed her trust. She stood up and accused Aishad of being involved in a sexual affair with the man who had raped her. She said that she refused to be under the leadership of an adulteress any more. Aishad ran out of the meeting crying. I was not there, so Vera took half the church with her, and they were now meeting in

her house. I could hardly believe that people, who themselves had lived through war and who had also been abused in terrible ways, could be so cruel, but at that time I didn't understand quite so clearly the nature of trauma and how it can affect us.

Understanding Trauma and Self-Care

One of the hardest things I have found about living in a war zone is dealing with the pain caused in relationships, as traumatized, hurting people clash with other traumatized, hurting people. I remember one day a couple of weeks before this, when I was on the bus on my way to see Vera, the lady who had caused the church split. The bus was making its way through the center of town, where the devastation was at its worst, with piles of rubble everywhere and not one building left standing. The desolation caused by the war in that section of town was obvious everywhere I looked. I felt the Lord clearly impress upon me the fact that the people of the city had been just as devastated by what they had been through as had the buildings. It was just not so obvious at first sight. And just as it takes time and effort to bring restoration physically to the city, so it would take time and effort to bring healing to the people. This revelation gave me a new compassion for the people and particularly helped me to have compassion in that difficult church situation with which I was dealing.

The other people who had decided to stay loyal eventually arrived at our meeting on that Friday, but they all seemed to be in the same state of fear, tension, and despair. There seemed to be absolutely no good news whatsoever; life just seemed to be one complete nightmare after another. And the doom and gloom got worse and worse with each new topic of conversation. "They're going to start bombing again, and we're all going to die," said one. "And if the bombs or the bullets don't get us this time, starvation is bound to finish us off," wailed another. Changing the subject, someone starting talking about something else we were all trying not to think about: "I dread to think what terrible things are happening to Valera. Maybe they're torturing him right now." Someone helpfully added, "Unless they've killed him already." Changing the subject again to another equally depressing topic, someone grumbled, "How could the others have deserted us and gone with that awful woman?" Someone else verbalized what we were all thinking: "If that's how believers treat each other, what hope is there?" Everyone seemed to agree that it was the end; there was no hope left. I remember that sickening feeling of terror, despair, and hopelessness sticking right in the pit of my stomach. I thought to myself, "You know, they're probably right. There's no way out of this situation. It's totally hopeless, and we're all going to be killed. What's the point of going on?"

Taking a Break

I felt the Lord teaching me through this situation that I needed to take regular breaks and times away, in order not to fall into that terrible pit of despair and hopelessness that so characterized most of the people I was working with. I found that when I was actually living in the war zone itself, I needed to have a couple of days to get away every two weeks. This involved traveling about three hours to another country, which was not at war at that time. I enjoyed having contact with the outside world, being with people who were living more of a "normal" life, just relaxing and resting, and enjoying the countryside and city that had not been devastated by war.

If I did not have this break away, I found that at times I did not have the strength to rise above the despair and hopelessness that surrounded me. I needed time to be renewed in hope, to see the joy, beauty, and good things of life, and to get my perspective back on the Lord and His goodness again. I needed to have times when the Lord could make me lie down in green pastures, lead me beside quiet waters, and

restore my soul (Psalm 23). Being in beautiful surroundings in the mountains in itself was restoring, and it was also really healthy from time to time just to have a break away from the devastation of war.

That morning at the house church meeting, I led the worship as best I could, and the Lord graced us with His presence and His peace. As we focused on Him, His light came in, much of the fear, despair, and hopelessness lifted, and the Lord renewed our hope and gave us the strength to go on. Even Nadia came into the meeting during the worship and sat weeping in the corner as the Lord ministered to her. Then I shared something from the Word, and we were encouraged and uplifted even more.

Worship

I have found that worship has been a lifeline in strengthening and uplifting my spirit. Sometimes when I have been so overcome with fear that I felt I could totally lose control, when I've started shaking or have been frozen to the spot, I have been able to start singing in my head and worshipping the Lord, and He has brought me through. Sometimes when I have been in dangerous situations, I have had my Walkman with me and have been able to close my eyes, listen to the music, and be caught up in worship, knowing that my life is in God's hands.

Corporate worship has also been so uplifting. Often when the despair and hopelessness are almost overwhelming, when we begin to worship together, the presence of the Lord comes. As we take our focus off the problems and focus instead on Him, He fills us with His peace and joy. Aishad and I have had times when everything seemed very bleak, and we did not feel we had the strength to go on. But as we have begun to praise the Lord, we have been filled with an amazing sense of His joy deep within our spirits, in spite of the circumstances—something that I have never experienced to that degree anywhere else. We have truly known His joy as our strength, as we have danced unashamedly before the Lord, oblivious to the sounds of gunfire in the background.

Other Episodes and Lessons

After the meeting, we prayed for all those who wanted prayer, then had tea and cakes together. We dispersed about an hour before sundown so as to make it home before curfew. Late that night, Aishad and I were praying, while her mother was in the kitchen reading. There was loud banging at the door, as soldiers shouted at us to open up. Aishad refused, telling them to go away. They told us they would break the door down, and we could hear them laughing as they beat the door with their rifle butts and kicked it with their boots. I had a tremendous sense of the peace of God and just wondered how God was going to get us out of this situation. Somehow the men decided to give up and left us, but because it was such a close call, Aishad and her mum were in a terrible state, shaking with terror. They had to take some valium to calm themselves down. I was amazed at the supernatural peace I had been given at that moment, and so I was able to pray for them and bring some comfort to them.

The following morning, exhausted from too many nights of not getting a good, undisturbed night's sleep, I walked to the bus station to begin the long journey out of the war zone to Vilt. There I was hoping to make some contact with the outside world, as well as try to find out some information about Valera, our worship leader. At the bus station, I found a seat on a rapidly overcrowding bus. I was quickly joined by a soldier who sat down next to me and placed his rifle across his lap with the barrel facing me. As we drove over and around all the bomb craters and rubble in the road, I whispered a quick prayer that the rifle would not go off. The bumps were so violent and the suspension of the rickety old bus so bad that at almost every bump, we bounced so high that our heads nearly touched the roof.

We shared a laugh together each time we landed safely back in our seats!

Humor

I realized how important it is to maintain a sense of humor in situations like that and to have times of fun and laughter. One thing I have always been able to do is laugh, and that has been a real release. Because of the high levels of despair and pain, there need to be times when I can just have fun and let out the tension. One example of this was when some friends of mine were at home, and their building was being fired at by heavy artillery. They were taking shelter under a table and were listening to their tape recorder. They decided to have some fun by recording a travel "documentary" to attract tourists to the war zone. To the sound of heavy artillery fire, the boy's voice comes on welcoming people to the sunshine state, where the grass is green and the sky is blue. This may be dark humor, but it is important to see the funny side of life and not take yourself or life too seriously. From time to time, I organize events for our church and in the camp when we can play games and just have fun together.

Hobbies

I have found that it is helpful to have a hobby or be involved in some other form of recreational activity. Creative arts such as painting, writing, and music can be an excellent way not just of relaxing, but of expressing some of those emotions which may have been pent up. God can also use this creative expression to bring healing to both soul and spirit. I enjoy painting, as well as playing the piano and guitar, and I find that taking the time to relax with these pursuits can bring release, restoration, and healing. It's also plain old fun!

Personal Growth and Healing From the Past

There were other factors that were also involved in leading me to the verge of breakdown. God wanted to do a deep work in me and purify my motives. He showed me some deep-rooted, ungodly influences that have been affecting me since early childhood, which He wanted to uproot. I had grown up in a single-parent family, without a father, and my mother had found life difficult and needed quite a lot of help and support. There was alcoholism in our extended family, which brought its own set of problems and difficulties. So as a child I had grown up with the burden of false responsibility for the lives of my family, and as an adult I realized I had the tendency to do the same thing. God gently and lovingly revealed this to me and showed me that I was subconsciously still doing it, because it made me feel good about myself and gave me a reason for living. He also showed me that because I didn't feel unconditionally loved as a child, I had been striving hard to try to please Him and earn His love, when in fact He loved me freely just the way I was. He also made me examine myself to make sure that being a missionary was not about running away in an attempt to forget my own pain. Through showing me these things, He has purified and healed me, set me back on the right track, and given me a new perspective on my life and my work.

Leading on from this, God showed me that as a missionary working with a faith mission, I had gotten caught up in the trap of "people pleasing." I grew up in a community in the South East of England where, because the Protestant work ethic was so ingrained, there was a strong sense that in order to be accepted as a person, you had to be doing something useful with your life. This was something I already struggled with because of my childhood experiences. I realized that this feeling was intensified because I was being supported and was living on the gifts of my friends and supporters. I had felt a terrible pressure to perform, to "come up with the goods," and to live up to people's expectations. This pressure to show the people who were supporting me that I was doing something useful and was not lazing around or wasting my time or their money

led me to work far harder than I should have. It also sometimes pressured me to do things not because God had asked me to, but for the sake of giving a good report in my newsletter. To report that I was taking some time off or having a holiday made me feel incredibly guilty, and it seemed easier just to continue working than to take adequate rest.

Saying No

Another very important lesson I needed to learn was not to be driven by the needs of the people around me. When surrounded nearly the whole time by desperately needy people, it was very hard for me to say no or to walk away from a need. I have come to realize, however, that even if I worked tirelessly 24 hours every day, there would still be people who needed help. I was surprised one day when reading in the Gospels that Jesus sometimes said no to people in need, and He did not always heal everyone. At the Pool of Bethesda, there were many disabled people. Yet Jesus only healed one, and then He walked away, leaving the others still disabled (John 5:1-15). He also said that the poor are always with us (John 12:8).

What I am learning is that I need to do only what I see the Father doing, as Jesus used to do (John 5:19). I cannot meet the needs of all the people in the country where I work, let alone in the world. But Jesus can. I must only do what I see the Father calling me to do; the rest is His responsibility. I also needed to learn that Jesus, not I, was the Savior to these people. They were His responsibility in the end, not mine. I was no longer to take on any false burdens of responsibility.

Physical Need: Myself or Others?

Something else that I have had to come to terms with is a form of culture shock, in which I felt guilty for coming from the West and having lived a life of luxury compared to what the locals had gone through. Because they don't have any time to relax, let alone have any holidays, and they hardly ever have enough to eat, it made me feel incredibly selfish to think of taking a holiday or eating well. I felt as if they needed these things more than I did, so how could I be so selfish as to think of myself?

An example of this is that sometimes I would buy milk for myself as a special treat. Dairy products were expensive and scarce, and I hadn't had any in ages. Then I would see a child who also hadn't had any milk for a long time. After wrestling with the matter for a while, I would give the child the milk. It was lovely to watch the youngster relishing it, but I needed milk too. I also found that when people would send me vitamins for myself, I would usually take them for a couple of days and then find someone who was more needy than I was (not difficult to do in a war zone!), and I would give the vitamins away. It is difficult to find the balance here, but I am learning that I need to be strong so that I can go on helping others. If I don't learn to look after myself, I will not be around for the long haul.

Sabbath Rest

The Lord also had to teach me that I needed to take adequate rest. All of my life I have been a very hard worker, and as a child, the idea of taking a Sabbath of rest had not been modeled for me. As I have studied my Bible on the subject, I have been amazed at some of the things that God has commanded. I had read them many times before but had not really put them into practice. If the almighty, eternal God, who does not grow tired or weary, rested from all His work on the seventh day of creation, how much more should we mortal human beings take a day of rest every seventh day? Not only did He rest, He blessed this day of rest and called it holy, just because He was resting on it (Gen. 2:2-3). In the same way, our day of rest is a holy day, because we are resting on it. I was also deeply convicted when I read God's command to Moses that any-

one who does *any* work on the Sabbath should be put to death (Ex. 35:2). This seems to me to be an extremely severe punishment, suitable maybe for murder or rape, but not for such a seemingly trivial crime. But God is a merciful God and does not make mistakes.

The sin of not resting was obviously as serious to God as the sin of murder or adultery. God, our creator, knows how important it is for us in body, soul, and spirit to take time out to rest and be restored. Rest is not just an afterthought; it is a command that God takes very seriously. If we don't take one day off a week, be it on a Sunday or another day if we are serving in the church on Sundays, then we are being disobedient to His commands and are opening ourselves up to the devil, to bring in sickness, depression, or exhaustion. This was a major factor in my becoming so exhausted and nearly suicidal. It is so important to learn this principle, whatever our job. How much more, when, working in a war zone, is it necessary to rest and take time to be restored.

Motives for Work

Recently God challenged me about what was motivating me in my work, and He asked if I was willing to lay my work down. This may sound like an easy thing to do (anything for an easy life!), but for me it was one of the hardest things God could have asked of me. I love my work; in fact, my life had become my work, and it had become an idol. At the time He asked me, I had many different projects running which I felt I could not just leave in the middle. I felt that I would let too many people down and that I had become indispensable.

I hadn't realized that my work had become too important to me, until the Lord tested me and showed me the state of my heart. He also showed me the pride that was in my heart. I felt good about myself, because I felt that I was not just an "ordinary" person. I was serving Him and was willing to risk my life by working in a war zone. I repented and gave all these matters up to God, and a period of refining took place. God has reconfirmed the calling on my life to serve Him where I am. He wants me to serve Him purely out of a heart of love towards Him. Now I know that it is His work, not mine, and that He can take it from me any time He chooses.

In Conclusion

There are many things that the Lord has taught me in the past few years of working in a war zone. He has taught me the importance of spending quality time with Him, of worshipping, of taking adequate rest and looking after myself, of taking breaks and having some fun. He has shown me that I can't do everything alone and that I need other people with whom I can be vulnerable and share my heart. I also need to have adequate support from my home church, along with good covering. The Lord has purified my heart of many of the ungodly motivations and influences that had been affecting me since early childhood, and He has taken away burdens of false guilt and false responsibility. He has done much healing and refining and is teaching me to enjoy just being His daughter. I am learning to get my self-worth from who I am in Him, not from what I do.

These changes have not happened overnight, and I am still in process in many areas. But I know that God is faithful to bring to completion that which He has started (Phil. 1:6). He is refining me, so that I can be a more effective minister of the gospel and so that I will be able to serve Him for the long haul. I am still working with my dear friends from this particular war zone, although I don't actually live there now. I live nearby and am in the process of setting up a Trauma Counseling Center, which will be a place of refuge, safety, and healing for them and others.

The story has some endings, not just for me, but also for my dear friends, although there are still many struggles. We found out where Valera was after three

months of looking, and we were able to see him released after a short trial. God marvelously turned the situation around for His glory: while we were looking for Valera, his grandmother became a believer, one of his cell-mates became a believer, and at his trial Aishad had the opportunity to share the gospel and pray publicly for the judge and the courtroom! God also answered our prayers for his safety: not once during those three months had he been beaten or tortured. How I wish it were the same for others!

The situation involving the church split has also been resolved. About a year and a half after Vera had split the church, she repented for what she had done and asked Aishad to forgive her. The two churches were reunited again under Aishad's leadership.

At the moment of writing, the war continues to rage, and most of the people I love have lost their homes. But God is looking after them and meeting their needs; for some, including Nadia, Zulai, and their families, He has even provided the money for them to buy new homes. There does not look like much of a chance of a permanent cease-fire, but God is again turning the situation around. I do not understand all of this. Who does? Yet in the midst of war, He is bringing people to Himself, and the church is growing slowly but surely.

Reflection and Discussion

1. Under what circumstances should missionaries be sent to dangerous places? Is it different for single women and families with children?

2. When is "enough enough"? In other words, at what point should mission personnel be evacuated because the risk is too high?

3. Identify some of the main helps that enabled the author to survive in a war zone. Is there anything that you would have done differently?

4. How can missionaries be prepared to work/survive in similar settings?

5. Respond to this statement: Our loving God, who is all good, does not always protect His children against the atrocities of war.

Paula O'Keefe with Nastya, a child from a tragic background who now lives with her.

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Best Practice Guidelines

Best practice codes are designed to help organizations provide quality services, manage their staff well, and remain accountable. A number of codes now exist within the Christian mission and humanitarian aid communities. Here are two examples of codes that have been carefully developed with the input of many organizations. The first is from the United Kingdom, and the second is from Canada. Both are relevant for other countries as well.

Global Connections United Kingdom

The Global Connections Code of Best Practice in Short-Term Mission is designed to apply to all visits, experiences, teams, and placements of up to two years' duration, organised by UK mission agencies, churches, and other organisations. Though formed initially with cross-cultural contexts in mind, it can apply to both UK and overseas situations, both same-culture and cross-cultural.

This Code is a code of best practice. Our motivation is based on our desire that God be glorified in all that we do. We also recognise our responsibility towards all participants and partners in our programmes, that we serve them to the highest standards possible. The Code does not necessarily indicate current achievement, but rather our aspirations towards high standards in short-term mission practice. Nonetheless, some minimum accomplishments are implied in the Code.

It is recognised that not every situation permits a literal application of every element of the Code. For example, sending local church involvement is not always a reality. Nevertheless, it *is* desirable and so must be included in a code of best practice. In the case of college placements, sending local church responsibilities belong to the college. In every case where literal application is impossible, consideration must be given to the question of who may have equivalent responsibilities.

Section 1: Aims and Objectives

1.1. A short-term mission programme will have clear aims and objectives. These will include viability and sustain-

ability, and consideration of how the programme serves the long-term objectives of the sending organisation, the host/partner organisation or church, and other interested parties. The programme will have a clear place within Christian mission.

1.2. Attention will be given to the benefits to and responsibilities of the participant, the sending organisation, the host organisation and/or the host local church, and the sending local church.

1.3. Partnership relationships will be established, as far as possible, with host local churches and communities. Attention will be given to ownership and continuity.

1.4. Appropriate sending church involvement will be sought. An agency/participant/church partnership will be developed, as far as is reasonable.

1.5. There will be a commitment to develop the participant through the experience, including giving attention to personal Christian growth.

Section 2: Publicity, Selection, and Orientation

2.1. Publicity materials will be accurate and truthful. They will be targeted appropriately and used with integrity.

2.2. Publicity will clearly represent the ethos and vision of the sending organisation and will define the purpose of the programme in terms of service, discipleship, and vocation.

2.3. The application process, including timescale and financial responsibilities, will be clear and thorough.

2.4. A suitable selection process will be established, including selection criteria and screening. A pastoral element will be included, regardless of the outcome of selection.

2.5. Appropriate local sending church involvement in the selection process will be invited.

2.6. Orientation prior to departure and/or after arrival will be given. Team leaders, field supervisors, and field pastoral carers will be briefed.

2.7. Preparatory information (between selection and formal orientation) will be provided as early and as fully as possible.

2.8. Placement decisions will be clear and transparent, will be made with integrity, and will be communicated to all involved (including when changes are made).

Section 3: Field Management and Pastoral Care

3.1. Clear task aims and objectives and, where appropriate, a job description will be provided.

3.2. There will be clear lines of authority, supervision, communication, responsibility, and accountability. Communication and reporting will be regular.

3.3. Pastoral care and support structures will be established. The respective responsibilities of the sending church, sending organisation, host organisation/local church, and team leader/job supervisor/line manager/pastoral overseer/mentor will be made clear to all parties.

3.4. Opportunities for personal and spiritual development will be provided.

3.5. Participants will be given guidelines on behaviour and relationships.

3.6. With reference to above items 3.1–3.5, culturally appropriate ways of fulfilling these matters will be sought.

3.7. Procedures covering healthcare and insurance, medical contingencies, security and evacuation, stress management and conflict resolution, misconduct, discipline, and grievances will be established, communicated, and implemented as appropriate.

Section 4: Reentry Support, Evaluation, and Programme Development

4.1. Reentry debriefing and support will be seen as an integral part of the short-term "package" (along with orientation, task supervision, and pastoral care) and communicated as such to participants, field supervision, and the local sending church.

4.2. Reentry preparation, including placement appraisal, will begin prior to return.

4.3. The agency will have considered its role in assisting the participant through reentry, including facing unresolved personal issues, and future opportunities and directions in discipleship and service.

4.4. The sending local church will be briefed on reentry issues and any sending agency responsibilities and expectations.

4.5. An evaluation of agency procedures will be undertaken, including comment by the participant, the sending local church, and any host organisation/local church.

4.6. An evaluation of the responsibilities of the host organisation/church (where they exist) will be undertaken. An assessment of whether the host's needs and aims were fulfilled will be carried out. Culturally appropriate ways of feedback will be sought.

4.7. The results of evaluations will be communicated to relevant managers, for the improvement of future projects.

Adopting the Code

There is no suggestion that, without this Code of Best Practice, agencies and churches will not aim to develop their programmes to the highest possible level. The Code does, however, provide guidelines and a means towards excellence. The aim of any implementation procedure is not to "police" the Code, but to support its aims of continual improvement, quality, high standards, and excellence. Yet implementation must be a meaningful process, so as to avoid mere lip service, which undermines any value the Code may have.

There is a formal adoption and implementation procedure for the Global Connections Code of Best Practice in Short-Term Mission, which is as follows:

1. An agency/church decides to formally adopt the Code and advises Global Connections to this effect. We will then provide some forms for completion.

2. There will be two signatories to the Code, one being the person responsible for running the short-term programme(s), the other being an executive officer of the church/agency (e.g., chairman, CEO, senior pastor, etc.).

3. Those who adopt the Code are encouraged to indicate this on all publicity and materials relating to their programme(s) and must provide information about the Code to all participants.

4. Implementation includes the following commitments:

   a. Adoptees will be represented at all biannual Global Connections Short-Term Mission Forums.

   b. Before signing, active consideration will be given to how each section and element of the Code is presently being addressed by the agency/church.

   c. There will be an active commitment to benchmark in every area of the Code. The Global Connections Short-Term Working Group will assist in liaison with other suitable agencies/churches and in providing training opportunities in benchmarking.

   d. A brief report will be submitted annually to the Global Connections Short-Term Working Group, describing how the Code is being implemented, with submission of current operating benchmarks. A pro-forma will be provided by Global Connections for this purpose.

It is recognised that there are many different short-term programmes operated by agencies and churches. The above Code of Best Practice and implementation procedure are designed to be as flexible as possible. Benchmarking provides a means by which this variety can be taken into account, as different benchmarks are developed for different contexts.

There may be some agencies and churches for whom, for a variety of reasons, adoption of the Global Connections Code of Best Practice is not a desired outcome. Should they wish to develop instead their own internal Code of Practice, they

may (if they wish) apply to the Global Connections Short-Term Working Group for approval to include the words "based on the Global Connections Code of Best Practice in Short-Term Mission" in their own Code.

For further information about the Global Connections Code of Best Practice in Short-Term Mission, please contact: Global Connections, Whitefield House, 186 Kennington Park Road, London SE11 4BT, UK; tel. 44 20 7207 2156; fax 44 20 7207 2159; email: info@globalconnections.co.uk. Used by permission.

Evangelical Fellowship of Canada

The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada Code of Best Practice in Member Care is designed as a benchmark document to guide the policies and practice of organizations regarding the care and development of cross-cultural Christian workers. Although it is written for Canadian organizations, others in the international community may find it useful. However, it must be recognized that basic resources for support may not exist or be available in many situations.

This Code does not necessarily reflect current practice but encourages aspirations toward excellence. It is not intended to establish legal standards or liability. Rather, the motivation for the development of this Code rests on the theological foundation of godly stewardship of people who are made in the image of God. Appropriate member care is a tangible reflection of Jesus' command that His disciples love one another and witness to the world that they belong to Him.

The Code was derived consensually by mission and church representatives across Canada. Discussions at a March 2000 Member Care Roundtable in Toronto, Ontario, provided the material for the initial draft, which was written by Dr. Irving Whitt and Bob Morris. This Roundtable was jointly sponsored by Missionary Health Institute, MissionPrep, The Intercultural Ministries (TIM) Centre Tyndale, and the Task Force for Global Mission of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada. Suggestions for revision of the document were made by participants at a subsequent Roundtable in Langley, British Columbia, sponsored by the ACTS Intercultural Ministry (AIM) Centre and the Task Force for Global Mission, EFC. The Code in its present form was written by Dr. Laurel McAllister (AIM Centre), in consultation with members of the sponsoring organizations.

Core values underlying the Code include the following:

- A commitment to dependence on God for wisdom, power, and love in all aspects of member care.
- A commitment to the total well-being of cross-cultural workers—helping them minister effectively, while recognizing the hazards, stresses, and sacrifice inherent in cross-cultural life and ministry.
- A commitment to the biblical ideal of the body of Christ working together, through the church, mission organizations, and other partnerships.
- A commitment to the appropriate utilization of all available resources.
- A commitment to encourage organizations to practice care of their members with consistency, excellence, and high standards of ethical, spiritual, and moral responsibility.

Some of the main terminology in the code includes:

- **Principle**—a broad statement of purpose.
- **Key indicator**—an observable and measurable outcome related to a principle.
- **Member**—a cross-cultural Christian worker—missionary, tentmaker, or otherwise.

Section 1: Organizational Policy and Practice

Principle 1

Member care policies for all members—at home, abroad, or in transition—are effective, efficient, agreed upon, and transparent.

Key indicators

- Leaders throughout the organization effectively model member care.
- Human resources staff, both at home and abroad, are recruited in part for their people management skills and are adequately trained to provide member care.
- The organization monitors how well member care policies achieve their objectives.
- Members have clear work objectives and performance standards, know to whom they report, and know what support is provided by the organization.
- Benefits, such as adequate health care (physical and mental) and pension plans, are provided and reviewed regularly.

Principle 2

Members participate in the development of member care policies.

Key indicators

- Meetings of the organization's Human Resource Department (or equivalent) are regularly scheduled.
- Policy information is distributed routinely to members, and feedback is encouraged.
- Regular re-assessment of existing policies and practices is initiated and encouraged by the organization and its membership.
- Mutual accountability between organization and membership is encouraged and practiced.

Principle 3

Agreed-upon personal and organizational beliefs and conduct are essential to effective member care.

Key indicators

- The organization has clearly stated policies concerning acceptable personal and organizational belief and conduct.
- A means of communicating these policies is in place and is utilized.
- The policies are consistently applied.
- Ramifications of particular unacceptable behaviors are specified.
- The ability to accept differences in non-essentials is articulated and is in evidence.

Principle 4

The organization is committed to developing an ethos of member care that enhances kingdom ministry.

Key indicators

- Member well-being—whether spiritual, physical, emotional, mental, moral, or social—is visibly identifiable.
- Core values for member care are in writing and available to everyone.
- An identifiable infrastructure exists for explicit care.
- Sufficient financial and human resources are allocated for the care of the members.
- Transparency, within the context of confidentiality and trust, is encouraged as part of the organizational culture of care.
- Issues necessary to move the organization toward a culture of care have been identified.

Section 2: Selection, Training, and Career Care

Principle 5

Candidate selection is fair, thorough, and takes into consideration the anticipated role(s) of both women and men.

Key indicators

- The organization designs and conducts a thorough, objective candidate selection process, utilizing the best available resources.
- Issues relating to singleness, as well as to marriage and the family, are discussed.
- The selection process includes physical and mental health screening, where possible.

- The process is clearly written, is provided to candidates at the outset, and is periodically reviewed with them.
- The process is undertaken in cooperation with the candidate's sending church(es).
- Decisions throughout the selection process evidence a clear sense of God's leading to all concerned.

Principle 6

Assignments reflect the member's expertise, giftedness, developmental stage, strengths, and limitations as much as is possible—while recognizing the need for and God's call to workers in settings with limited resources and uncertain consequences.

Key indicators

- Members are given as much information as possible regarding ministry situations, so they can give "informed consent" to the assignment from the outset.
- In the case of married couples, assignments reflect consideration of the gifts and skills of both wife and husband.
- Assessment tools, including effectiveness evaluations and development reviews, are implemented.
- Team building exercises are carried out as possible and applicable.
- Training and mentoring are provided for assignments requiring additional expertise.

Principle 7

Appropriate training and professional support for members are integral to effective member care.

Key indicators

- The organization provides appropriate intercultural and language training before and during field assignments.
- The organization provides opportunity for professional support, such as participation in professional conferences, professional refreshment, membership in professional societies, and opportunity for job-specific training and further studies, as appropriate.
- The development of qualified leaders within the organization is valued and provided for.

Principle 8

Realistic work expectations, personal renewal, and endurance strategies are articulated and provided.

Key indicators

- Job descriptions are in place and subject to annual review.
- Discussion of strategies for long-term effectiveness are scheduled on a regular basis.
- Resources and accountability partners are found in national churches and within the host community, when possible.
- The specific needs of both single and married members are appropriately considered.
- Members take an appropriate amount of time for home service (furlough) on a scheduled basis.

Principle 9

Organizational responsibilities extend beyond field service to home ministry (furlough), reentry, retirement, and to redeployment, where necessary.

Key indicators

- Debriefing, including physical, psychological, ministry, and pastoral concerns, is required and provided.
- Rest, renewal, and opportunity for personal and ministry assessment are considered an essential part of home service (furlough).
- Members minister in supporting church fellowships in ways that are mutually enriching.
- Transition opportunities/seminars, which include cultural issues and issues related to redeployment, reentry, and retirement, are provided.
- Resources (human and financial) are allocated for follow-up care during reentry or redeployment.

Section 3: Community Life

Principle 10

Healthy Christian communities enhance personal growth and development as well as ministry effectiveness.

Key indicators

- Responsibility for self-care, in community, is modeled and encouraged by leadership.
- Mutual care is planned for, clearly defined, and its importance communicated.
- The unique needs of single members are considered and provided for.
- Members develop reciprocal relationships with a variety of people in the host community.
- Periodic personal, team, and organizational assessments are required.

Principle 11

Responsibility for member care is personal, mutual, and organizational.

Key indicators

- Trained caregivers are identified and made available to members when needed.
- Opportunity is given for member interaction and mutual caring.
- Persons responsible for each sphere of organizational care have been identified.
- Members are deemed responsible for taking an active role in managing their own care.

Section 4: Family and Missionary Children (MKs) Care

Principle 12

The effectiveness of the Christian worker is related to the holistic care of the family, appropriate and proportionate to the stages of life.

Key indicators

- There is provision for reassignment of primary homemakers as children grow through different phases of life.
- Opportunities for marital enrichment and couple retreats are provided and encouraged—both on the field and during home service (furlough).
- Financial provision and counsel are made available for families in transition, including resignation or retirement.
- The organization makes provision for follow-up care for member families at reentry, and beyond for MKs.
- Professional, personal, and spiritual assessment is provided for all members of the family.
- Care for the family may include extended family members.

Section 5: Relationships With Churches

Principle 13

The local sending church is included in the continuum of care.

Key indicators

- There is evidence of shared trust among the local sending church, the organization, and the member.
- Communication is evidenced between the local church and the organization at every stage of a member's life.
- The organization partners with the local church in a member's preparation for initial ministry assignment, reentry, redeployment, and retirement.
- Such partnerships exhibit realistic expectations and mutual benefit.
- Training of members is shared by the organization and local church where possible and mutually beneficial.

Section 6: Crisis/Contingency Care

Principle 14

Cross-cultural life and work can be uniquely stressful for individuals and

families. Therefore, procedures are in place and resources provided to help members in a variety of contingencies.

Key indicators

- Members agree on what constitutes a crisis.*
- Policies governing the handling of the crisis are written and communicated to all members.
- Policies, existing to cover a variety of contingencies, have explicit information for each contingency.
- Policies exhibit flexibility and sensitivity.
- Necessary care, such as post-traumatic stress care and counseling, is available.**

Principle 15

Procedures and resources are in place to discover and deal with issues of moral lapse. A disciplinary process is defined and a process of restoration spelled out.

Key indicators

- Preventative issues and strategies are addressed in pre-field training.
- Confidentiality is respected and balanced with accountability to the organization, sending church, supporters, and other members.
- Confidentiality and all related issues are clearly defined and made known to all parties involved.
- Movement toward restoration is made whenever possible.

Reflection and Discussion

1. Is *best practice* a concept that is relevant for your setting? If so, how could it be built into the organizational culture and personnel policies? (See chapter 1.)

2. Which best practice guidelines can help us prepare and equip missionaries to care for *themselves* when overseas, particularly in isolated/difficult situations?

3. How do we prepare and equip missionaries to care for *each other*, including coaching team leaders in this area? What would be a few best practice principles to help field workers pursue mutually supportive relationships with both nationals in general and the national church in particular?

4. How can Older Sending Countries (OSCs) facilitate the emerging member care *networks* in the Newer Sending Countries (NSCs) without being patronizing or paternalistic? Which principles can enable NSCs to develop their own models of caring which will be culturally appropriate? Is there a way to "vet" member care networks—to validate them so we can safely recommend people and programs—and help them be accountable? (Refer also to chapter 47.)

5. In general, how can we *internationalize* member care more within our own settings, especially given the influence of the OSCs in this area? Should some best practice guidelines also be formulated for the global development of the member care movement?

Special thanks to Marion Knell with Global Connections/United Kingdom and with Member Care/Europe for her help with the Reflection and Discussion questions.

* Suggested definition of crisis: A situation which creates, or has the potential of creating, trauma for the individual or family and which needs immediate attention on the part of leadership, e.g., field issues; contingency-related issues such as disasters, political kidnapping, death, accidents; personal and family issues (including raising teens); moral issues; major medical needs; deep depression, anxiety, contemplation of suicide, etc.

** The reality of spiritual darkness and the conflict inherent in Christian ministry contexts affect workers in complex and often traumatic ways. Crises may be related to spiritual battles that workers are involved in. Caregivers need to be aware of this dimension and how to deal with it.

27

Care and Support of Local Staff in Christian Humanitarian Ministry

JOHN FAWCETT

What types of member care resources do national and local staff need? How do their needs differ from those of expatriates? What obligations do agencies have to provide locals/nationals with similar types of member care as their international and expatriate counterparts? Can we and should we do better? These questions are addressed by the author, drawing upon his experience with the humanitarian aid sector and World Vision International.

World Vision International (WVI) is one of the largest Christian humanitarian organizations in the world. It employs over 500 international staff and nearly 11,000 local staff in 100 countries. Funding comes from a wide variety of sources, ranging from individuals to governments. In 2000, World Vision's total global income approached US$800 million.

World Vision is an Evangelical Christian organization, and all expatriate staff are Christian. Many field offices, however, are located in countries where Christianity is not practiced or where there are few people with the required skills who are also Christian. Therefore, a relatively high percentage of the 11,000 local staff are not Christian. Appropriate support of these people can be a complex and challenging matter. Employment policies and practices need to ensure staff are appropriately hired, according to local and international employment law and without offending local religious or community practices. Policies and practices focused on the care and support of staff need to be inclusive and properly supportive and should not be interpreted as proselytizing.

Both the nature and complexity of international humanitarian work have changed dramatically over the past 20 years. Many organizations no longer act in ways that their founders would have predicted. World Vision began its ministry in 1950 with children orphaned as a result of the Korean War. Today, World Vision continues to work with children, but it is also involved in advocacy, community development, emergency relief, and specialist health and agriculture programs. While World Vision continues to work with local churches, it has found it equally important to maintain strong relationships with both host and home

country governments. Today, no large humanitarian agency would be able to perform its mission without reference to such global entities as the United Nations, the World Health Organization, the World Bank, USAID, the European Union, and other major international bodies.

Despite these changes, one simple fact has not altered. The final connection—the point at which the assistance is actually given and received—still lies in the relationship between one human being and another. At the field level, the place where ministry is performed, one human being passes on this help to another human being who is in need. Whether in the form of food, clothing, housing, Bibles, or knowledge, the pivotal point of caring is a human relationship, birthed, in World Vision's case, in a relationship with Jesus Christ.

The Changing Face of Care and Caregivers

When World Vision began 50 years ago, the primary caregivers in the process were international missionaries, mostly from North America, who had traveled the world to assist those in need. This is no longer the case. For a variety of reasons, today almost all humanitarian activity is performed by local people, many of whom are employees. This shift has occurred for good reasons. Ideas of patronage, charity, and labeling the poor as incompetent have quite rightly been rejected as repugnant and destructive. We understand today that people are competent to care for themselves and their families, given adequate resources and freedom. Secondly, the increase in direct humanitarian assistance over the past 20 years has outstripped organizational abilities to respond adequately utilizing First World resources alone. It is no longer possible to deliver any realistic assistance without the strong partnership relationships with local communities and through local leadership. The matter of providing appropriate support to local staff in humanitarian work is therefore of increasing importance to all aid and mission organizations.

Support From "Home"

International organizations have had a tendency to view the support of staff in terms of the employees' home environment. Historically, "support" was exported with the expatriate. Organizations developed their support systems around the needs of international staff, translating point-of-origin needs into transportable versions, adapted to fit an "alien" environment. The practical needs of international employees were unconsciously defined in terms of the underlying values and cultural norms prevalent in the society from which they came. "Support" was often defined as the effort to recreate, as much as possible, conditions similar to those at "home." The extent to which this was possible depended largely on available resources rather than any ideology. Even the poorest of mission societies attempted to provide glimpses of "home" for their distant missioners, and these glimpses were always enthusiastically received. Only in rare cases did such people adopt the practices of the local people, and when they did they were often rejected by their own employers as having "gone native," or, more politely, as having lost their minds.

We can see the remnants of this mindset today in the presence of expatriate compounds, exclusive international communities, and shopping centers devoted to the importation of goods from "home." Trans-global institutions such as the United Nations and military peacekeeping forces maintain expensive and well-stocked storage facilities around the world, so that employees can always have access to the goods from their homelands. Even today, with a very diverse multinational work force, staff support systems in humanitarian and mission work tend to be biased towards First World needs.

A Move to "Local" Support

International humanitarian aid has become more complex with more expatri-

ate staff becoming involved. International employee assistance specialists have proliferated, and organizations devoted to international support for expatriate workers have sprung up around the world. Unfortunately, while these programs offer excellent support services, they too are based on assumptions that humanitarian work is still being performed primarily by First World expatriates who are relocating to a "foreign" country. The disparity between conditions of employment for expatriate and local staff has become more apparent. The ability to transport very large items such as refrigerators, TVs, furniture, cars, and in some cases whole households around the world in "support" of expatriate staff emphasizes the myth that overseas adjustment is largely based on access to material resources. This disparity is heightened where local staff reside in conditions of poverty, and it may lead to dire consequences, including resentment, frustration, and even violence toward expatriate staff.

Organizations have responded to these challenges in different ways. Some, generally those with access to many resources, argue that a disparity in wealth between international and national staff is part of the cost of doing business. Without adequate salaries and housing, appropriately skilled expatriate staff will not be willing to move to where the work is to be performed. Other organizations, generally those with limited resources, encourage a model of "simplicity," where expatriate employees live as the locals do, residing in local accommodation and eating local foods while performing their mission. While this approach has certainly reduced obvious manifestations of financial disparity at a local level, any notion that expatriates can become locals simply by living a simple lifestyle is a fiction. Further, the expatriate always has a passport, a way to exit the stressful or even life-threatening situation, and options not always available to local staff.

Supporting Local Staff

Support of local staff in Christian humanitarian work requires attention to a number of factors:

- Integrity in employment practices.
- Treating staff as people, not producers.
- Physical and mental health.
- Skills enhancement and career planning.

The Importance of Consistent Employment Practices

Many international humanitarian and Christian missions began with the involvement of both international and local volunteers. In recent years, the practice of volunteering without pay has diminished. Although payment methods vary, most international providers of care receive some financial compensation for services rendered. The range is extreme, from the United Nations, where large salaries and considerable benefits are common, to small Christian missions making do on basic expenses and housing.

Local economies are increasingly based on industrial activities, and many people no longer have access to rural living or employment. Employment of local staff, therefore, often requires financial compensation. Increasingly, matters of labor law, policy, and practice are becoming commonplace, even in the poorest countries. It is incumbent on all aid organizations to ensure that local staff are hired legally and in accordance with both local and international labor policies and agreements.

World Vision attempts to maintain a degree of consistency between international employment and local employment. This is not to say that all staff are paid the same salary. Relatively speaking, international staff earn more than local staff. Salary levels are determined through a common process. Comparative salary surveys are conducted on a regular basis for both local and international staff, and World Vision aims to position salaries

within the normal range of payment in a given labor market. International humanitarian work has a scale of salary and benefits that is relatively consistent globally, and most humanitarian agencies compare employment packages with a selected group of organizations performing similar tasks. This process can be applied by organizations at the local level as easily as internationally.

There is a need for integrity. The extent of an employment package should be consistent across all staff. For humanitarian organizations, this is extremely important; for Christians, it is essential. The recipients of assistance will measure consistency and integrity partially by how local staff are employed. If, for instance, health insurance coverage is provided for international staff, it should, if possible, be provided to locals as well. It may not be possible to provide access in all areas, but it is recommended that field managers work towards enhancing a wide range of support provisions. These should include consideration of the following:

- Leave provisions, including annual, recreation, family, medical, emergency, and bereavement leave.
- Retirement provisions.
- Unemployment compensation.
- Overtime and compensatory time.
- Employment of relatives.
- Disability insurance.
- Grievance and dispute resolution procedures.
- Internal transfers and promotions.
- Sexual and racial harassment policies.

Workers Are People Too

A major challenge is the fact that local employees are also members of local communities. While this appears at face value to be self-evident, the actual practice of many aid agencies indicates that they believe otherwise. Part of this is a result of the influence of Western concepts of "work," and part has to do with the overwhelming rate at which humanitarian aid has grown in recent years. There is a tendency to act as if humanitarian aid is a product that is somehow separated from the producers. Employees, therefore, can be hired to complete units of work, for which they are paid. This process is encouraged by the manner in which government donor funds are gained. Essentially, humanitarian organizations contract with donors to complete discrete, measurable tasks for a pre-agreed fee. This "piecework" approach to humanitarian aid encourages senior managers and field staff to view their day-to-day activities as a kind of production line. The downside of this is that workers can be viewed as separate from the product and the process. In a factory, a piece of machinery that fails to operate can be removed and replaced. Applying such concepts to humanitarian work can lead to situations in which a worker who is unable to "perform," for whatever reason, may be deemed redundant and may be replaced by another.

In international aid and missions, it is not possible to separate the worker from the work. The ministry (work) is an integral part of the person employed to perform it. In fact, there is no long-term, sustainable outcome without the worker (minister). In major relief operations, the worker may for a time be hidden behind the crates of food and medical supplies being delivered by huge cargo aircraft. But once the food has been shared out, there is no excuse for ignoring the pivotal role that the local employee will play in the full restoration of community well-being and functioning. Large organizations, therefore, need to consider carefully whether local employees are being viewed as producers or people.

Physical and Mental Health

Mission groups have long been aware of the potential health consequences of overseas work. As medical knowledge has increased, mission and humanitarian agencies have significantly improved the way in which international employees are prepared for assignments overseas. Most organizations ensure that full medical his-

tories are taken prior to relocation overseas and that appropriate medications and immunizations are completed.

However, health care provisions for local staff have not been as comprehensive. In part, this has been due to a lack of adequate health services at field locations, but lack of attention to local needs has also added to the situation. In recent years, World Vision has acted intentionally to redress this through the development of local health insurance policies, coupled with enhancements in local medical services. Although these provisions are easier to achieve for large organizations, the most effective results have been obtained where agencies and missions jointly approach health insurers and providers with recommendations for ways to provide or enhance such services for local staff.

Organizations that have not taken steps to provide health care to staff would be well advised to do so. While there continue to be concerns over such conditions as malaria and tuberculosis, the major pandemic threatening virtually all aid and development work is HIV/AIDS. World Vision has seen a dramatic increase in the number of deaths of staff from AIDS in recent years, and the pattern is expected to grow. Partly obscured because of both intentional (the connection between AIDS and sexual behavior being unpalatable for many Evangelical Christians) and unintentional misdiagnosis, it is now apparent that AIDS will likely affect as many staff on a percentage basis as found in local populations. The potential impact on a local ministry in areas with high incidences of HIV/AIDS is significant, not only to programs but to employees and family members as well.*

The state of mental well-being has also become an important issue. In what is a relatively rapid development, mental health has become a centerpiece of international assistance. As community mental health programs have developed, particularly in relief environments, an appreciation has grown that local staff, as members of the impacted community, may also experience mental health problems.

It is difficult to identify precisely where this process began. Certainly the Rwandan experience highlighted the psychological trauma of genocide on a community. But before that, Cambodian survivors of the killing fields had drawn the attention of Western mental health experts; and prior to that, the plight of Romanian orphans, abandoned in appalling psychiatric institutions following the collapse of Communism, was noted. Certainly by the time humanitarian aid was required in the Balkans, mental health care had become a major part of the provision of assistance. While there is a significant way to go yet before it can be said with certainty what works in all environments, we do know that psychological trauma is a significant issue for survivor communities.

There is an increasing realization that front-line relief staff often experience negative psychological effects as a result of their field experiences. Although much research is still required, it is now generally accepted that exposure to extreme relief situations can result in severe psychologically disabling conditions. Recent research conducted in Kosovo by the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta indicated that up to 17% of both international and local staff experience clinical depression, and up to 6% of local staff fall into the serious category of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (Salama, 2001). In a single-country study that focused on local staff, measures of clinical depression were as high as 54%, while PTSD rates appeared to be close to 34% (World Vision, 2000).

The impact on the humanitarian aid community of this research has been considerable. It is hardly surprising that the

* World Vision International has recently implemented policies related to the health and protection of staff working in areas where HIV/AIDS is prevalent. The People In Aid Code/InterHealth contains useful guidelines as well.

mental health of international staff is today considered a serious issue. However, the research referred to above indicates that the psychological impact of disaster on local staff may be higher than that experienced by international staff.

Intuitively, this should not come as a major surprise. Yet aid agencies and missions continue to behave as if this cannot be the case. Within World Vision, as with other organizations, one of the major responses to the news has been to seek ways of limiting the incidence of psychological trauma in staff through recruiting refinements. Unfortunately, the reliability of psychological testing as a predictor of future psychological trauma is not high. While there are signs that persons with a previous psychiatric history are at higher risk than others in the development of psychological conditions, other types of personality testing do not lead to clear predictability (Salama, 2001).

For an organization the size of World Vision, the implications are wide-reaching. If the rate of clinical depression among local staff is somewhere between 17% and 50% (based on the available research), then World Vision has somewhere between 1,500 and 5,000 staff who are experiencing depressive conditions. If the real figures are nearer the lower end of the scale, there is still a significant group of people who may be in need of psychological services at a local field level.

Leaving aside the psychological discussion, the appearance of mental health issues for local staff leads inexorably back to the conclusion that despite their employment category, local staff are also survivors of whatever disaster or emergency has impacted the community. If there were no humanitarian need, there would be no need for the presence of a humanitarian organization. If there is a need and the meeting of the need requires the employment of local staff, then it is unlikely that humanitarian agencies can avoid hiring people with psychological trauma, at least to some extent.

Spirituality, Leadership, and Skills Enhancement

For a Christian organization such as World Vision, Christian spirituality is critical. The matter becomes more complex, however, where a significant percentage of World Vision's front-line staff are not Christian. Leadership in Christian ministry is intricately tied to World Vision's history. Yet local management may be in the hands of those who are not Christian. World Vision's policies preclude non-Christians from becoming senior managers, but this does not address the matter fully. The fact that World Vision actively discriminates on the basis of religious belief in certain parts of its organization creates potential problems. Yet World Vision is unashamedly Christian, and to retain this identity it needs to ensure Christian leadership.

World Vision has created a leadership training program that includes Christian maturity and experience at its core. This is a relatively new initiative and will take some years to implement fully. The overall objective is to equip leaders with the required professional skills and knowledge, while assisting them to develop Christian maturity, which will provide leaders for the future.

It remains to be seen how effective such efforts will be in retaining Christian consistency across an organization the size of World Vision. Even within the wider Christian community, there are significantly differing views as to Christian behavior, beliefs, and theology. Tensions already exist. There is also a significant number of managers who are Muslim, Hindu, or Buddhist. Many of these would expect their careers within the organization to advance. Efforts to halt this process may be problematic.

World Vision has established two working groups to seek solutions to these matters. One, focused on *Christian witness*, has the task to attempt to identify behaviors, beliefs, and lifestyles that can be defined as "Christian," in order to ensure that

World Vision is a witness to Christ, rather than to something else. The other, focused on *spiritual nurture*, is seeking to identify ways and means to help Christians grow and mature as they continue their ministry with World Vision. The major focus of both groups is local staff. While international staff are not being ignored, a core objective for World Vision is the growth and development of Christian ministry at a local level. It may not be too radical to suggest that the ongoing success of international Christian aid and missions work relies not so heavily on the presence of skilled international staff but more on the ability to attract, retain, and properly support communities of local staff and their families.

Supporting Local Staff: Case Study Honduras

In order to create an environment where the needs of local staff can be appropriately and safely addressed, World Vision has created an assessment process that fully involves local staff. Because the process is technology-free and is based on verbal conversations, it is cheap, portable, and applicable in a wide range of environments. It can be used with small or large numbers, for urban or rural programs. When applied at an organizational level, it has potential to impact individual well-being and organizational culture significantly. It can also improve productivity and help meet program goals. An example of the process as utilized in Honduras follows.

Phase 1: The Request for Assistance

Following the devastation of Hurricane Mitch in late 1998, the World Vision program in Honduras underwent significant changes. The widespread damage led to a major shift from agricultural development to relief work funded by the United States, Canadian, and European governments. The organizational demands increased proportionally, as did reported levels of staff stress. By 1999, concern among staff as to possible long-term psychological damage following Mitch led to a request that a "stress assessment" be conducted for World Vision Honduras staff. We have found that in most cases the most effective local staff support initiatives have occurred in locations where the initial request for assistance has come from local management.

Phase 2: The "Stress Assessment"

The assessment process generally takes three to five days, depending on the size of the field office. In this case, it was necessary to take the full five days. The Field Director and all the senior management staff were requested to take part in the process. (Virtually all this group are local staff.) Because the initial request had been framed in terms of stress and trauma, the first two days were spent in education on individual stress, stress management, psychological trauma, burnout, and trauma treatment alternatives. Key questions considered during these sessions were, *What is stress? What is psychological trauma? How do such things impact me?*

During day two, there was increased discussion on the importance of organizational stress factors and a clarification of the difference between organizational and individual stress. General measures of individual stress were used by the group in order for them to gain understanding of how much stress they were experiencing in the present. Measures used had been previously translated and validated for use cross-culturally. While not used in all WVI locations (some instruments require specialist guidance), measures have included the Impact of Events Scale (IES), the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-28), the Holmes and Rahe Social Readjustment Rating Scale, the Hopkins Symptoms Checklist (HSCC), and the Harvard Trauma Questionnaire (HTQ). A general job satisfaction survey is also recommended. A key question was, *How much stress are you feeling today?*

By the beginning of day three, the discussion moved to an examination of the nature of stress in Honduran culture and how such stress is managed. Many languages do not have a word directly translatable as "stress," and the easiest way is often to take the English word and make it sound like the other language. The meaning behind the word may not have transferred, however.

Discussion continued until the participants were confident that *they* knew what they were talking about. Only when this clarification has occurred is it possible to move ahead with identifying ways to provide appropriate assistance. This process results in a culturally and linguistically relevant definition of something related to "stress" but not constricted by European concepts. Key questions during the discussion were, *What is "stress" in Honduras? What does it look like? How do you know you have "stress"?*

The ethnographic process continued into day four. This time, the focus was on how the local culture deals with or copes with stress and how, traditionally, effective interventions are undertaken. The objective here is to assist the group in beginning to identify locally available resources that may not have been accessed in order to meet identified needs. The process is two-fold and tends to move back and forth between identified needs and identified resources. The discussion of the day before will be revisited, and the training inputs on day one will be reviewed and challenged, as local culture begins to interpret and inform. A key question is, *What, traditionally, do Hondurans do to alleviate, deal with, cope with, remove, and live with "stress"?*

The objective by the end of day four is to have two clear lists. The first is a list of the factors that cause discomfort, stress, or pain (or however these are defined in the local language). The second is the list of activities, remedies, resources, or practices that traditionally lead to a reduction of the stress. It is to be expected that there will be some stress factors for which resources to ease the pain do not exist or are insufficient.

The two lists will each be subdivided into two subsections. The list of stress factors will comprise those that exist in the wider community (that is, stressors to which everyone is exposed), as well as those that exist specifically within the organization. Likewise, the resource list will be subdivided into the two categories. Key questions for this process are, *What factors cause stress (pain)? What remedies reduce stress (pain)? What are general factors? What are specific to our organization?*

Day five completed the process by determining the extent of the organization's responsibility towards stress management and the development of a plan to meet the identified needs. The World Vision Honduras team identified five major areas of need. These were human resource management, office administration, organizational culture, relationships with other World Vision offices, and the health of staff.

Each of these major topics had numerous specific items attached to them, which for reasons of space and confidentiality are not included here. However, it is interesting to note that although psychological distress was discussed, it was generally agreed that most "felt" stress was related to work factors, rather than to conditions such as poverty, community violence, or lack of educational opportunities. Nor was there any major concern over high degrees of psychological trauma, although some staff who reported significant personal losses as a result of the hurricane were identified as experiencing high stress levels. For these staff, the enhancement of access to pastoral, health, and psychological services locally was viewed as being an appropriate organizational response. Key questions here were, *What concerns or issues are those that must be addressed by the employing agency? What issues or concerns are the responsibility of the individual?*

The final part of the process is the creation and publication of a plan for implementation of the organizational response to the assessment process. This is probably the single most important component of the whole activity. At this point, senior management are asked to commit to the provision of sufficient resources of time and money so that changes can actually be implemented. Without this step, it is likely that the process will be ineffective or even viewed as negative by participants and other staff.

For World Vision Honduras, the total support of senior leadership was evident from the beginning. By the end of the last day, a fully detailed, three-year plan had been designed and agreed to for dealing with each of the issues identified throughout the week. Further, each identified task had been assigned to one or more of the management team for attention. Time frames had been determined as to how long each task would be expected to take, and each task had been assigned in the calendar to a specific quarter of one of the next three years. Preliminary estimates of costs associated with each activity had been made, and some initial potential funding sources had been identified.

The overall effect of these strategies was significant and immediate. In the first place, those who would both implement and benefit from the plan had designed the whole thing. Although external facilitation was provided, local staff had performed the work. Second, there was a clear and precise identification as to what would be addressed and when work would start. Third, senior management was clearly totally committed to the whole process.

Phase 3: Implementation and Evaluation

This phase is ongoing and is readily assessed by internal and external evaluators. Local staff support is becoming part of the overall strategy of the World Vision Honduras operational plan for the next three years and has become part of their resource assessment and acquisition. Although not all the activities have taken place in the order they were planned, and some have not occurred at all, in the overall context of a humanitarian aid and development agency working in a difficult environment, the achievements have been impressive.

Conclusions

In determining the shape, structure, and general conditions of support services for local staff, it is necessary to consider carefully how the local culture is itself structured, how support is given in that context, and how Christian service can be introduced in such a way as to be welcomed and not condemned. Appropriate care will consider the place of the family in society, the place of the individual in the group, the role of community leaders, how healing is performed, and how success is defined and recognized. In environments where poverty is extreme and nutrition may be less than balanced, it is possible that local staff needs may have more to do with what people eat than what they think and how they feel. If a staff member's family is living in a hovel, it may be that the staff person is less able to perform expected duties during the working day.

A full local staff support program will need to consider the practical conditions of life—food, housing, job security, education, health, insurance, and so on. Psychological support may be required. Counseling services, based on local cultural practices, will almost certainly be needed. Spirituality, the need for a person to meet with God, must be central, with understanding/respect being shown towards previous religious experiences. Christians occasionally diminish spiritual experience that fails to fit their own definitions, to the detriment of Christian witness. It is also important to extend an invitation to walk closer with God through the person of His Son, Jesus Christ. In

sum, however, each country and each culture will need to develop its own unique form of local staff support services, if it is truly to meet the needs of all.

World Vision's program of local staff care and support is at a very early stage. At the time of writing, a few field countries have implemented comprehensive staff care. Resources for this type of initiative are limited. However, encouraging progress is being made. Most WVI field offices now employ full-time human resource (HR) managers, who have the responsibility of creating appropriate staff support services. Regional and global meetings for these managers are held at least once a year, and training opportunities are increasingly available. It is critical that partnerships with Christian missions, other NGOs, and member care professionals around the world are created to move ahead. World Vision welcomes comments on how further improvements could be made.

Reflection and Discussion

1. How might your cultural background influence your understanding of the terms for *care* and *stress*?
2. How could some of the approaches used in the Honduras case study be used by your agency in its care of staff?
3. How does your mission or agency integrate local caring resources into already-existing support services?
4. Is care of local partners an optional activity, depending on factors such as available funds? Who decides which resources will be made available?
5. How, in very practical terms, does the support provided for local partner staff compare with that provided to expatriates?

Appendix
Life for National Humanitarian Workers*

by Viola R.N. Mukasa, Uganda

Emergency and development work is a strange business, sustained by equally unusual people from within or outside a country. These are people who respond to another's cry for help and sometimes to their own cries. I choose to call them help-workers (HPWs). These people commit themselves for a time to help or even "save" a particular piece of the world. This may often cost them their security and other luxuries, including personal relationships, but they gladly pay the price, usually in the name of altruism, for the sake of a mission task that is usually defined by others who are far off.

I'm an HPW living in a location in Africa that is in prime need of help/missions. I've experienced many types of stress as I have worked in various mission programs. The most sustained tension I've experienced has been related to the urgency and the amount of work to be done in a potentially explosive social and political environment. The challenge is not only to produce expected results quickly, under tense and sometimes risky circumstances. The challenge is also to deal with the constant worry about the security and health of those within my immediate world.

There is tension from having detailed knowledge of the context and locale of the humanitarian setting. I'm often familiar with the problem, the attitude, the threats within the community, and the fickleness of certain politicians in allowing for help.

I have another line of sustained tension that comes from belonging and yet being apart. I belong to those who are helping and to those being helped, but I'm neither an expatriate nor a beneficiary.

* This section is based on a presentation given at the "Managing Stress for Humanitarian Aid Workers" conference in Amsterdam, The Netherlands, September 6-8, 2001, sponsored by the Antares Foundation and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

It is as if I am being followed by a ghost which constantly reminds me that the needy person—for example, the displaced person in the transit camp—could have been me. Oh yes. And there are all kinds of other tangible reminders of my own vulnerability and mortality, as I witness the life and death experiences that link me very closely to those I'm trying to save.

The fact that emergency aid work does not directly influence conflicts, but instead responds to the devastation they cause, greatly affects national HPWs. It colors our attitude and often limits our enthusiasm. We can only do so much. The consequences of the conflict affect us strongly, because they mirror not only what could have happened but what could still happen to us and others close to us.

Further, both national and international HPWs have a difficult working environment which allows little time to process personal experiences and manage stressful situations and issues. In such situations, I'm just glad for the speed with which we must execute our work. Responding quickly to others helps keep most of my anxieties out of focus and has made me tougher. These anxieties can overwhelm an HPW, so we need to develop some emotional armor in order to last.

I often wonder if my colleagues and I, consciously or otherwise, are trying to play God. Both the helpees and the helpers can view the latter as a type of savior. The brutality of reality can obscure the closeness of the true Lord and the fact that it is not we but He who is indeed still the real Savior and Shepherd.

Since I am a committed Christian, a core part of my survival strategy is to keep in touch with God by communicating with Him and referring to His Word. We need His presence to encourage us and to remind us that we are not ultimately of this world. Yet we are called to love and help others in this world, as His co-laborers. Maintaining this perspective is so important! It is so easy to lapse into pride, anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, and filthy language as we encounter people's pain. It's also easy to become pessimistic as we wonder why God allows wars and suffering. To keep sane, I constantly have to pray for grace and wisdom, refer to God's commands in Scripture, do my assigned duties to the best of my ability, and let God be God. I also need the support of those around me and from the organization for which I work.

Let me now share some more practical realities for national staff workers. Here is a fictitious case study of Mako, a logistician with an imaginary organization called EXACT.

The World of Mako

I'm called Mako because I'm just about the only one who can remember my long, "funny sounding" second name. It's the same for most of us local staff, though, especially as there's so little time for personal things, such as second names. I'm the logistics officer of Express Action (EXACT), and I've been working with them since the war broke out in the north over two years ago. I studied marketing and business administration, but I have now specialized in procurement, storage, and transport of aid supplies. I've learned much about EXACT on the job and, of course, from the numerous "emergency experts" regularly sent out by headquarters in Milan. Some of these experts are good. The rest are too busy to get to know. They seem always to be in a hurry and are constantly talking to Milan and the field. They've developed a brilliant evacuation plan—for themselves and non-nationals.

I like my job, and the pay is more or less adequate, given the situation in my country. But I am struck with how "cheap" life is valued up north. It's threatened by land mines, rebels, and fighter planes. Hunger, disease, and death are also present. I've been trying to trace my uncles and grandmother to see if they are safe. Their village was evacuated after the bombing last month. It's not easy to juggle work with tracing people, so I've given their names to a friend of mine at the Red Cross tracing office. My mother expects

good news from me every day about the search results.

I basically enjoy the speed and urgency with which emergency operations are done. I am glad to be helping people suffering because of the war. These days, the national drivers talk more often about the risks we take, but always casually over their tea or as they pack their trucks to head out. We all worry, but we try to keep focused on our tasks. Sometimes the secretary and the cook—not many others—inquire about our journeys. They only have a vague idea of how it is for us in the field and at home.

My family worries when I travel, not convinced about the thoroughness of the security precautions that I say we take. Sometimes I really miss my family. These days, I try to avoid telling people back home that I'm going to the field. At times, I'm not sure about things myself. The politicians keep doing things more out of their own interests and not necessarily based on what is best for the people affected.

I don't share my concerns, though, with others. We all have our own share of troubles, and these risks come with the territory as an aid worker. It's enough to drink beer and joke together after a hard day. Sometimes I'm scared, and I know that the others are as well, but it's as if to acknowledge fear is to give it life. But when my anxiety becomes desperate, I try to think through my future. I stop and wonder what my family would do if I were killed or disabled by a mine, and the war moved to where we now live. I also puzzle over why we're struggling to stop the bleeding when we can't repair the artery. I've started looking for another job.

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28

Administrative Guidelines for Remaining or Returning

LAURA MAE GARDNER

When a missionary family or missionary is involved in a difficult or traumatic situation, the agency administration has three choices: allow them to remain on the field, return them to the home country, or relocate them where additional resources are available. What criteria does a sending agency use to decide which of these to recommend/require?

Major decisions that affect the lives and location of mission personnel are difficult. This chapter examines an organization's decision-making process for determining the best options for struggling or traumatized personnel. I begin with five case studies, followed by some principles, resources, and procedures to consider. I finish with a discussion of the lessons to be learned.

Case Studies

Case 1

Mr. and Mrs. Lee are nearing the end of their ministry overseas. They plan to return to their home country in Asia within 15 months to obtain higher education for their three children. All of their current efforts are devoted to finishing the village program and establishing the new little church of 20 believers. Although the boarding school sends repeated reports of concern that their middle son, John, age 15, is using and distributing drugs, they seem to be oblivious to any need to respond. He is failing four of his five classes and is currently on probation.

Case 2

Jim and Lynn Smith, new in their country of assignment and deep into language and culture acquisition, are busy building relationships with the local people. Lynn has demonstrated an amazing aptitude for language learning. She is well ahead of Jim in this area, triggering in him some strong feelings of insecurity and inadequacy. Not only has he become unduly critical of Lynn and of things in general, withdrawing from spiritual and social activities, but he also has been indulging in pornography. During their applica-

tion process, Jim had not mentioned a previous pornography addiction, because at that time he had been free of it for two years. He believed the desire was gone. The current increase in stress has caused it to recur, and the temptation is stronger than ever. Jim spends many evenings accessing porn sites on the computer.

Case 3

Hans and Olga spent their adult life on the field, planning to die as they had lived—among their beloved national friends. Now at ages 63 and 61, they just learned that Olga has leukemia. She has been given only two months to live. Her children and family want her to come back to their home country in Europe, but she refuses to go.

Case 4

Alfonso and Maria pioneered this region in the Sahel of Africa, making friends of nationals and hosting new mission members and visitors. But a church split at home has severely impacted their support, dropping it to subsistence level and sapping their motivation. They have no money to purchase needed supplies, such as a computer, or to pay indigenous workers. Their energy is low. They have become unproductive, bitter, and divisive. All efforts to affirm and challenge them have failed. Worse, those efforts have alienated Alfonso and Maria from their friends and from each other to the point where they seldom talk with anyone.

Case 5

Civil unrest in a Central Asian nation has reached the point where the embassies have sent directives for expatriates to return to their sending countries. Most expatriates have left the country. Not Robert and Ruth! They came, committed to lay down their lives for Jesus' sake, and they fully expect that to happen. They are determined to stay and die among their national friends. Their home church is pressuring the sending organization to "do something!" In the sending country, the couple's adult children are extremely anxious and alternate between being angry at the organization and being angry at mom and dad.

These case studies, though disguised and hypothetical, are not fictitious. They have happened in the history of mission endeavor. A prepared sending organization anticipates such occurrences by having good policies, trained managers, and on-site member care workers. However, the tendency (when the moment of decision comes) is to act based on emotion, rather than on reasoned evaluation. Even when there are counter-indications, the result is often a reluctant decision by the field administration to allow the people involved to remain on the field. How can an administrator, a superintendent, and a responsible manager make a decision that weighs all pertinent factors?

Three Principles to Follow

Principle 1: Respect

When considering options for staying or going, an administrator, leader, or member care worker must treat the members with the respect to which they are entitled, honoring their courage and commitment. Face-to-face interaction is best, if at all possible. We must keep in mind that believers who join an agency or who go out representing their church generally do so with the intention to serve in both good and bad times. Even when severe difficulty enters their lives, they cannot easily renege on their initial decision.

Principle 2: Levels of Impact

Working through location and care decisions must take into consideration the perspective of a wider community. Members must understand that the decisions they make will not only impact the national believers, but also their colleagues, their families, and their supporting partners. Awareness of the message they are sending to their adult children and other

family members in the home country is vital.

Principle 3: Control

Members must be willing to yield a degree of control over their life, location, and decisions. They must be helped to understand that when they join an organization or represent a church, they give up the right to function as totally independent units. They must heed direction from their leaders, seeking and following input from experts with greater experience in crisis situations. They must be assisted to understand the liability they place on an organization when they disobey its directives.

Resources to Access

Most mission agencies have access to specialists. Such specialists should include:

- Internationally knowledgeable, Christian legal counsel.
- Crisis managers with expertise in developing contingency plans, assessing and monitoring levels of risk/danger, giving input on security and personal safety, and providing debriefings.
- Professional therapists who are missions-aware, experienced, and approachable.
- People who understand mission matters from the perspective of a leader, a manager, a pastor, and a caregiver.
- Skillful consultants who are able to evaluate danger or distress levels from a distance and who know how to coach by asking good questions.

All of the above are specialists—helpful, useful, and sometimes essential resources. It must be kept in mind, however, that in some situations, such as interacting with members who want to remain/die in the country they have called home for most of their life, the need is for basic understanding and care, not necessarily a specialist. Wise and compassionate leaders/administrators can help struggling members understand that a timely retreat can permit future return and ongoing ministry. Such leaders are key sources of encouragement during painful transitions and difficult decisions.

Some Suggested Procedures

1. Planning in Advance

What can be treated on the field? My opinion is that some situations generally should not be allowed to remain on the field. These include severe depression, behavior destructive to self or others, psychotic or suicidal behavior, major moral failure or immorality, dissociative identity disorder (multiple personality disorder), pending death, rape victims, situations of child abuse or family violence, chronic/debilitating illness requiring substantial care from others, persistent lack of production, addictions, and criminal acts (e.g., financial embezzlement, theft).

In general, the field is not the place to get treatment, especially if few or no professional resources are readily available. If the problem includes any of the above, the members usually belong back in their sending (passport) country. There they can have access to skillful professional care (true for most sending countries) and can be supervised by those who have personnel responsibility. The stress caused to this one person or family by requiring a return to the passport country must be weighed against the detrimental effects to many, should the individual or family be permitted to remain on the field.

2. Evaluating the Situation

What are the significant issues? In situations involving major problems and critical decisions, it is important for leaders/helpers to define the problem clearly and get the facts. Here are some areas to explore:

- Is the behavior appropriate, given the circumstances?
- What are the precipitating events or conditions influencing this person's behavior?

- How long has this behavior been going on? Is there a pattern?
- Is harm being caused or experienced by anyone right now?
- How pervasive is the impact of the behavior? Who is being hurt/impacted by it?
- How intrusive or restrictive is this behavior on the person's functioning?
- What is the potential for this person to harm self or others?
- Is the behavior getting worse or better?
- Is there a change in sight? Is change likely to happen? Under what circumstances?
- What are the potential benefits or liabilities of keeping this person/family on the field?
- Does the behavior threaten the organization's reputation/work in the country?
- What is the probable impact on community morale, security, and/or safety?
- Does this person's behavior disrupt the harmony and unity of the local mission group?
- What is the attitude of the member toward receiving help?
- What has already been tried? How was it received?
- If no action is taken, what are the probable/possible consequences?
- Is the situation serious enough that the home office might want to play a role?
- What are the costs (financial, emotional, administrative) to keep this person on the field?
- Are existing services able to meet the demands of this person's or this family's needs?
- Will serving this person or family stretch local services beyond their intended function?
- Will other potential users of services be excluded due to this person's or this family's needs?

3. Exploring Options

What help is available? There are a number of items to sort out regarding resources:

- What kind of local counseling care is available?
- How does the counselor's training and experience match the person's treatment needs?
- Does the counselor's schedule allow adequate time for treating this person?
- Are there more appropriate treatment opportunities available in the person's homeland?
- How will the counselor's other opportunities or responsibilities be affected?
- Will treating this person on the field prolong or shorten his/her recovery in the long run?

4. Making the Decision

Although the decision to send an individual or family home is an administrative one, in almost every situation, the person or family involved must be allowed to have input into the process as well. Many times, however, the involved individuals will not want to go home, and they are likely to minimize the extent of the difficulty, the impact they have on the local community, or the demands they are making on local resources. Therefore, the final decision is usually the responsibility of the local administrator, after appropriate consultations with home country administration, international leadership, and specific resource people.

5. Implementing the Decision

When the single/family is informed about the decision to return them home for help, fairness demands careful adherence to existing procedures and policies. These policies should require a face-to-face encounter on the field, with discussion and dialogue of issues with those involved. Permission to return to the field must be contingent on clear, written criteria for necessary changes. Good docu-

mentation is necessary. This involves a recorded history of the problem, any attempts to deal with the matter, and the overall plan to help. It is best to do all the documentation while the member is still in the country of service.

Lessons to Be Learned

Headaches and heartaches accompany moral failure, upheaval in a country, major illness, and other tragedies on the field. These can be eliminated or ameliorated by the presence of previously established policies for dealing with such problems. Here are some more items to help:

- Have members indicate through a signature upon joining the organization that they have read and are in agreement with these policies.
- Periodically review these policies with members and as an organization.
- Maintain a list of consultants and resource people for crises, therapy, and management.
- Link good management with good caring by communicating with people as individuals, discussing difficult matters early, creatively and jointly considering options, being willing to make hard and timely decisions, and accessing appropriate resources to meet people's needs.
- Affirm people. Many people have made a poor decision with good motives. Honoring the motives while helping them remake the decision can be done in a respectful way, letting people know they are wanted back (if this is so) when they have made the changes that prompted their removal from the field.
- Be accountable. In addition to organizational accountability, a leader must see himself or herself as accountable to God for how people and situations are managed. It helps people to know that their leaders look to God for help and wisdom and that the leaders themselves are under authority.
- Be aware of ripple effects. The way people are treated during their personal crisis affects their attitudes toward the Lord, the organization, and their future role. Administrative care of "Mom and Dad," for example, has an indelible impact on the children in the family.

Conclusion

People are to be valued for who they are more than for what they do. They are a trust from the Lord. How they are cared for matters to God. A sending organization that is proactive in its member care does not hesitate to speak to a situation before it escalates out of control. It has a "member friendly" stance that will encourage and promote early and honest communication with members who need help. It has an ethos that understands human weakness and the reality that "we all stumble in many ways" (James 3:2). Security comes in knowing that leaders, while not condemning individuals who fall into temptation, will neither condone harmful behavior nor allow it to continue.

Biblical authority results in building people, not bestowing punishment. The process of responsible administration may feel painful to the member at times, yet our intent is always restoration and wholeness. And so is our Lord's. As Paul says, "The authority the Master gave me is for putting people together, not taking them apart" (2 Cor. 13:10, The Message).

Reflection and Discussion

1. How much authority can an organization legitimately assume for minor children of its members? Can it insist that the parents get treatment for a child with problems? What should the administration do in cases such as the following?

   a. Parents hide a child's handicap, failing to obtain specialized educational aids.

   b. A minor teenager engages in immoral sexual behavior with a national young woman.

   c. An anorexic child is placed in a children's home and refuses to eat. Her

parents have placed her there so they won't have to deal with this dilemma.

d. A child has reported sexual abuse of some kind. The parents say, "We want to deal with it ourselves."

2. What can an organization do when a charming, charismatic, productive person begins to show signs of stress and paranoia, leads an underground mutiny against the leader, and has effectively divided the group?

3. An Asian male has committed adultery with the family's maid, but to send him and his family back to their sending country would involve the highest shame and loss of face for this family, for the church, and for the sending office in that country. What other options does the agency have?

4. After considerable deliberation, an agency has asked a family to return to the passport country for counseling, due to moral lapse on the part of one of the members. The family is not in agreement and has mustered a core of supporters from among the other field members. The administration is not at liberty to divulge any details of the case to the membership because of confidentiality restrictions. How would you deal with this situation?

5. A family is in turmoil, with divorce looming and looking better to the wife all the time. After attempts to deal with the situation on the field, the husband has finally agreed to return home with his wife for marriage counseling. He insists, however, that it be a certain specialized school of counseling. He alone will be the judge as to the adequacy of the therapy and the biblical skill of the counselor. How insistent can an organization be in crafting therapy in a case like this?

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Reinventing Missionary Commitment

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Different generations, like cultures, make and live out commitment in different ways. For Generation X to make the rich contribution to mission of which its members are capable, mutual understanding and commitment between organization and missionary are necessary. "Systems thinking" within mission organizations could become the means of bringing about this commitment.

Generation X members, from whom most of today's Western missionary recruits come, have been brought up in a world quite unlike that of earlier generations. Consequently, they have a very different way of viewing the world. The speed with which things become obsolete, the frequency of broken marriages, and the threat of nuclear conflict with the resulting sense of a lack of future have together spawned fear and hesitancy about commitment. A survey of young Australians has found that many perceive the frequent marriage breakups of their parents' generation as the result of commitment made too early and too quickly. Therefore, they doubt their own capacity to carry through with commitment (Mackay, 1997). This explains the preference of Generation X missionary candidates to commit themselves only for short periods initially—to "see how things go."

Since this view is in sharp contrast to the traditional requirement of lifelong commitment, sight unseen, as the benchmark of the reality of a candidate's call, it has been all too easy for older generations to label this new generation "uncommitted." "What will happen to mission when they are in charge?" they anxiously ask one another. "If only they could be like us." However, being like earlier generations, even in approaches to commitment, is not what is needed in today's postmodern world. Just as the booster generation had qualities needed for their day, so today's missionaries bring to mission strengths which equip them well to be part of today's developing young churches.

The difficulty for mission agencies is that the average short term is usually inadequate for learning the host language and culture well enough for effective ministry. If we believe that Generation X is right for this day, how might

this work out? We suggest that the answer lies in organizational commitment. By definition, organizational commitment is mutual commitment between employee and employer (Meyer, 1997)—in this case, between missionary and mission. Generation X members are strongly group oriented, with a high capacity for lasting attachment. This is clearly seen in the relationships they have within groups of friends with whom they typically "hang out" (Mackay, 1997). They also have the capacity for passionate commitment to an owned vision (Donovan, 2000). The challenge for mission organizations is to do what is needed to bring these strengths of Generation X to full flower in the context of mission. As a first step, a completely new look at the organization's side of organizational commitment is needed.

With this in mind, our focus in this chapter is to move towards a reinvented organizational commitment, which meets the needs and uses the strengths of both Generation X missionaries and the organization. Consideration of organizational commitment in relationship to attrition is followed by examination of generational differences in commitment, then by discussion of commitment as a two-way responsibility. The final section considers a radical paradigm shift in mission thinking, which could lead to a reinvented commitment suited to this day.

It should be noted that the research findings quoted and our own observations are based on studies from Older Sending Countries (OSCs), especially Australia. However, the suggested way forward in the final section has relevance to all sending agencies worldwide.

Organizational Commitment and Attrition

The importance of organizational commitment is underlined by its relationship to attrition. There is ample evidence of a close connection between low employee or missionary organizational commitment and attrition (Donovan & Myors, 1997a; Meyer, 1997; Wilcox, 1995). The corollary is also true: more committed people are more likely to remain with an organization (Meyer, 1997). The 1996 WEF survey of 14 nations found that "inadequate commitment" was high on the list of leaders' perceptions of causes of missionary attrition (Brierley, 1997).

Two important components of an individual's commitment to an organization are strength of attachment and identification with its values and vision (Meyer, 1997). Several studies of missionaries and Christian workers confirm that the greater the sense of belonging to an organization, the greater the likelihood of continuing with it (Donovan & Myors, 1997a; Nygren & Ukeritis, 1993; Wilcox, 1995). Since Generation X members have high capacity for both attachment and passionate pursuit of an owned vision, it seems likely that they also have high latent capacity for organizational commitment and therefore for continuing as overseas missionaries.

Three other findings are of special significance to organizations. Firstly, there is evidence that the individual's commitment is a developing process, greatly influenced by early experiences in the organization (Meyer, 1997). Secondly, older people appear to be more committed than younger ones (Donovan & Myors, 1997a; Nygren & Ukeritis, 1993). While this may partly reflect longer time to develop the organization/missionary relationship, it does underline the special need for care of younger missionaries. Thirdly, individual differences in focus of commitment may have an important influence on staying with an organization. People whose commitment is to all levels of an organization are more likely to stay than those whose commitment is mainly to one particular group, such as the team with which they work (Becker & Billings, 1993). For missions, this points to the importance of congruence between home and overseas in missionaries' experiences of their organization's commitment and to the whole concept of "systems thinking" (see the

section on "Organizational Commitment as a Two-Way Responsibility" below).

Generational Differences in Views of Commitment

In this section, we will look at the influences upon each of the three generations currently working in mission, which resulted in their particular view and practice of commitment. We will identify changing patterns of commitment across generations and the ways in which these patterns match the changing needs of national churches. We see this as a vital step towards acceptance of the need for a reinvented commitment. For further details on the implications for mission of generational differences, see Donovan and Myors (1997b).

The Commitment of the Booster Generation

Born before 1946, the boosters in Western countries were primarily socialized by the modern dream of progress towards justice, wealth, and peace for all. The World Wars and the Great Depression were interpreted within that worldview. Out of those experiences came enhanced capacity to endure hardship, to persevere against any odds, to focus on a single goal, and to do whatever was needed for as long as it took to achieve.

Boosters respected and trusted leaders and were high in institutional loyalty. When the leader said, "Jump," they asked, "How high?" Thus, they brought to mission a commitment which was strong, loyal, long term, sacrificial, and focused on the task. It was exactly what was needed for the difficult work of breaking new ground for the gospel. It led boosters, sight unseen, to remote, difficult, and often dangerous situations, where they planted and nurtured churches. Their commitment was to getting the gospel to the whole world, regardless of personal cost. Everything else, whether family, career, recreation, or any other precious thing, was simply entrusted to God.

Although just right for that day, that kind of commitment became inappropriate as young churches matured, leading to "the problem of staying" (McKaughan, 1997). For example, some of these great pioneer missionaries went through the pain of rejection by the young churches they had planted, simply because they failed to see when their paternalistic leadership style was no longer wanted. Then God sent the baby boomers.

The Commitment of the Baby Boomer Generation

Born between 1946 and 1964, the baby boomers, although primarily influenced by modernism, began to ask some of the questions characteristic of postmodern thinking. The world they knew as children had experienced the meaningless devastation of World War II and the impact of blind obedience to leaders, which resulted in the Holocaust. Thus, they became questioners and protesters, discarding conformity and searching for perfection. At the same time, this was a period of unparalleled scientific advance and opportunity for education. Therefore, the baby boomers brought to mission a commitment focused on excellence in ministry—glorifying God by the best use of their training and talents wherever He led them. Quality of ministry rather than its length was the issue for them.

Boomers came to the young churches as well-trained specialists at just the right time, offering teaching and advice or technical expertise. They did not share the booster trust in leaders or the booster loyalty to institutions. When their leader said, "Jump," they asked, "Why?" since they needed to know that jumping was the most efficient and effective way of using their gifts and training. Their strong commitment to their family, especially to the educational needs of their children and their own need for professional development, often meant that their commitment was for a limited time. For them, commitment did not mean sacrifice of career or

family or serving with a particular sending organization for an unlimited time.

Boomers' great strength has been the expertise and training which they have brought as brothers and sisters in Christ to the developing churches, especially in Bible teaching and theological training, management and administrative skills, and technological projects. Their weakness has been that they may leave prematurely, if an opportunity arises which they see as being a better avenue for their gifts. While modernism, with its emphasis on the rational and cognitive (Grenz, 1996), has had an important influence on the thinking of both boosters and boomers, with the coming of postmodernism, God sent Generation X.

The Commitment of Generation X

Born between 1965 and 1983, Generation X is the first generation to have been primarily socialized by postmodernism. One of the central perceptions of postmodern thought was that "the Emperor Modernism has no clothes." In other words, the more that rational man discovers about the universe, the more clearly his inability to use these discoveries for the good of mankind is seen. For example, human cleverness in splitting the atom has resulted not in global prosperity, but in the constant threat of global destruction. Thus, members of Generation X doubt whether they will have much future, and so the idea of long-term commitment becomes an absurdity.

Generation Xers are also characteristically beset by disillusionment and cynicism over the perceived hypocrisy and ineptness of world leaders. They are a generation who reject second-hand truth and who constantly search for truth and meaning that they can own. They not only have very low institutional loyalty, but they also have a deep distrust of organizations and leaders. Because many come from broken homes or have been latchkey kids, they have been primarily socialized by their peers and/or by television (Beaudoin, 1998). This is why they are so strongly group oriented. "The dethronement of reason as sole arbiter of man's destiny" (Grenz, 1996) has led to much greater emphasis on the experiential and the relational.

The members of this generation are egalitarian, assigning equal value to all people, irrespective of race, religion, gender, education, occupation, or status. They prefer participatory leadership. When the leader says, "Jump," they say, "We will, if you jump with us." Nuclear fear and the rape of the environment have produced a generation of people who are vulnerable, sensitive, and very much aware of their own, others', and the world's fragility (Beaudoin, 1998; Donovan, 2000). This sense of fragility and rejection has generated needs for pastoral care and balanced living. These needs are often misconstrued by older generations as immaturity, laziness, irresponsibility, and/or lack of commitment.

As described earlier, Generation X members bring to mission not only a tentativeness about commitment, derived from fear of not being able to see things through, but also a propensity for deep commitment in the context of a loving, trusting, tested relationship. They have a need to belong, and they yearn for a theme—an identity and vision about which they can be passionate (Beaudoin, 1998; Donovan, 2000). Because commitment is seen as risky, they usually prefer short-term ministry in order to see how everything goes. If things go well, many will renew short contracts and may continue to do so term by term.

Generation Xers are strongly relational and yet are able to "hang loose." They value people for who they are and have a preference for arriving at truth through storytelling and dialogue. Because of these qualities, they are well suited to merging into national churches in these days when missionaries are needed not to lead but to be real friends. Their strengths are their capacity for friendship with people of all cultures, an unfolding, passionate com-

mitment to a vision that they own, and their willingness not to outstay their welcome. Their weakness is often not staying long enough to become really effective.

Summary of the Generations

In summary, moving across generations, several trends in commitment are apparent. These trends fit into the changing needs of missions, especially (but not exclusively) those of the Older Sending Countries (see Table 1). Firstly, there has been a broadening of focus beyond the task alone to include the family and then the community, along with an emphasis on improved quality of ministry through better training and more balanced living. Secondly, there has been a decline in exclusive commitment to particular sending organizations. Boosters saw service with a particular organization as an integral part of their calling. Younger generations perceive their calling as being to a particular ministry. Often, identifying a suitable mission comes later. Thirdly, the time factor has been removed from the notion of commitment. No longer is length of commitment considered to be a valid measure of its depth. As the risk of outstaying usefulness and/or welcome or of hindering growth and independence of the church is acknowledged, the value of letting go at the appropriate time is receiving far greater currency than ever before. Fourthly, there has been an increasing awareness of the need for team ministry, involving complementary gifts, mutual support, and a synergistic outcome.

Organizational Commitment as a Two-Way Responsibility

Generation X looks for commitment built on mutual attachment and trust. When leaders identify "inadequate commitment" as an important cause of missionary attrition (Brierley, 1997), it is clear that they mean the missionary's commitment. However, organizational research indicates that the level of employees' commitment to their employing organization is significantly influenced by their perception of the organization's commitment to them (Eisenger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986).

Does this finding apply to missionaries? In our study of Australian missionaries, the most important influences on

Table 1
Generational Differences in Commitment

Generation	Type of Commitment	Strengths	Weaknesses
Booster	Long-term commitment to task; high commitment to organization; sacrifice; high perseverance; family entrusted to God	Planted/nurtured churches against any odds	Problem of staying
Boomer	Focus on excellence in ministry; high commitment to serving where skills are best used; high priority on family welfare; depth of commitment more important than length	Teaching/equipping growing churches; fraternalistic; use expertise for community projects	May leave prematurely
Gen X	Initial commitment tentative—short term to test; commitment with a team; low initial commitment; depth of commitment more important than length	Propensity for passionate commitment; high need to belong; accepting and relational	Field work too short to be effective; fragile; need team and need to be valued by organization to function well

Table 2
Australian Missionaries' Satisfaction With Some Organizational Support Items

Item	% Agree	% Uncertain	% Disagree
Our leaders address problems early.	30	30	40
Conflict resolution is *not* well done in this organization.	43	24	33
When there is a complaint about me, leaders discuss it with me.	39	37	24
Our organization is weak in personnel management.	40	23	37
I am satisfied with our organization's crisis management.	49	33	18
My needs for pastoral care are satisfied.	42	20	38
I am satisfied with our organization's review procedures.	38	24	38
Communication within the organization is inadequate.	42	17	41
I had adequate debriefing on home leave.	36	17	47
I need to live a more balanced life than my workload allows.	43	17	40
I am adequately consulted in areas of my expertise.	61	20	19
I am encouraged to suggest ways of improving our ministry.	61	20	19
I feel heard by the leadership here.	65	18	17

commitment to the organization were found to be a sense of being supported by the organization and a sense of satisfaction with its management procedures, including review procedures, personnel policies/practices, and debriefing on home leave (Donovan, Griffin, & Myors, 2001). The perception of being personally supported by the organization was greatest when personnel felt valued and treated fairly. It was also significantly greater when field leadership showed care for missionaries' well-being through listening, addressing problems early and honestly, and allowing them scope to develop their own ministries.

How do missionaries perceive the commitment of their mission societies to them? Results from our survey of Australian missionaries (1,398 participants—a 60% response rate—from 34 sending agencies) suggest that many perceive major deficits in care. In Table 2, some of these are highlighted. It can be seen that significant numbers were dissatisfied with personnel management in general and with things like adequacy of debriefing on home leave and conflict resolution in particular. This finding accords with anecdotal evidence from our debriefing of missionaries on home leave.

Whether or not good member care policies are in place, many missionaries perceive that their sending organizations are not serious about their commitment to them. It is a picture, as Covey (1991) reminds us, of the farmer being willing to sacrifice the well-being of the goose (production capacity) in the pursuit of more golden eggs (production).

Clearly, as McKaughan (1997) suggests, this is a systems problem rather than an individual problem. A "system" is an entity (such as a mission organization) made up of a set of units (a group of people) and the interrelationships between them (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 1985). In a healthy system, perceived failure in one person is accepted as a systems responsibility, which may be pointing to a systems

failure. It seems to us that this kind of "systems thinking" is not always evident in mission organizations.

For example, when a missionary leaves field ministry before the expected time, how do organizations respond? How much attention, in fact, is given to the possibility of failure on the part of the organization? "Often," says McKaughan (1997, p. 20), "rather than evaluate and admit our organizational guilt or ineptness, we mission leaders abdicate our responsibility and too easily write off the individual as somehow not having measured up." McKaughan goes further and suggests that organizations' misuse of missionaries (systemic abuse) is a common cause of attrition. Examples of systemic abuse include inadequate screening and training, assigning missionaries to jobs for which they have no training or experience, poor communication, failure to provide regular evaluation and mentoring, and unwillingness by leaders to deal with problem situations. Usually there will be a combination of things, as in the following example:

A baby boomer agriculturist was recruited to set up an agricultural project in a very needy area. On arrival in the host country, he found he had been assigned to a different ministry in which he had neither training nor experience. When he complained to his booster leader, he was told that he was "poor missionary material." In fact, he was never permitted to work in agriculture. The missionary returned to the home country prematurely, a very disappointed and disillusioned man. He received no support at all from the home council, having been labeled as a failure by his field leader. This was a clear systems failure resulting in the loss of a valuable worker.

So the upshot is this: In organizational commitment, the missionary and the organization have equal responsibility.

Reinventing Missionary Commitment

If the commitment of Generation X missionaries is to develop, they need to feel a sense of belonging to their organization. They need to be passionate about its vision and their own part in it. They also need a conviction that the organization is committed to their well-being, as shown by being valued, treated fairly, and empowered for ministry. Although many good member care policies have been developed, very often they are pushed aside by the busyness and/or lack of motivation in those expected to carry them out.

A first-term couple told us this story: They were asked to fill in as field administrators while others were on leave. Having discovered annual evaluation forms in a cupboard, the wife started using them to interview missionary staff as they visited the office. One senior missionary wept with appreciation and said that no one had ever sat down with her before to talk about her situation—even though annual evaluation was mission policy.

How can missions become sufficiently motivated about member care that good policies will consistently be put into action? We suggest that the answer lies in a paradigm change to systems thinking. Some key principles of systems thinking relevant to missionary commitment follow.

1. Change View of Commitment

A changing world demands a changing view of missionary commitment. The idea of personal missionary commitment needs to be broadened to include the mutuality of organizational commitment.

2. Think Systems

Organizations need to see themselves as systems and need to "think systems" in their approach to all aspects of the organization's life. This means acknowledging the interdependence and inherent value to the system of all members. Thus, when one member is having a problem, this is

owned by the whole body. When the organization is sick, for whatever reason, the effects are felt by the whole body, and movement towards healing is seen as the shared responsibility of every member—that is, of the whole system. Systems thinking causes the "we/they" mentality to pass into history.

In the course of our work with missionaries, we see many systems problems causing unnecessary pain and loss of valuable personnel. One first-term horror story concerned a single man in his 20s. He was assigned by a mission agency to teach English in an indigenous university in a closed country. Regular breaks were to be taken in a nearby location which was not closed and where there were many missionaries. They included some from the young man's denomination, from whom he was assured that he could expect pastoral care. During the two years of his assignment, there was a series of stressful events, including ill health, being asked to leave his accommodation and having nowhere to go, and receiving very poor treatment from a local dentist. Insufficient orientation and language learning time heightened the missionary's lack of fellowship and extreme isolation. Whenever he went out for a break, he sought counsel and debriefing, but he found none. On one occasion, he went with a group of missionaries whom he met at a guesthouse to see the film *The Joy Luck Club*. The movie was so relevant to what he was experiencing that he sobbed all the way through it. He returned to Australia at the end of his two-year assignment depressed and disillusioned.

About the same time, we had contact with a couple who had fairly similar experiences. However, they had received regular visits from concerned superiors and competent debriefing during each break. When they returned to Australia for home leave, they had grown as people and were positive about returning.

For Generation X, systems thinking is second nature, as seen in their group/team relationships. They typically practice mutual care, accountability, and acceptance. They accept responsibility for one another when things go wrong. In projects, individuals contribute what they do best. Equal value is assigned to all members. Members work best in synergistic teams. They work things out together by dialogue and discussion.

Generation X members become disillusioned and quickly lose heart when they do not find these practices within the mission organization. On the other hand, when they find such things overseas, they thrive. One young missionary on home assignment shared that a key coping strategy for him during his first term in Africa was an accountability/fellowship group. He met one morning per week for an hour with five of his peers. They addressed topics such as their devotional life, time with family, relationships with other missionaries, relationships with national friends, and ministry. Members shared both positive and negative experiences and prayed for one another. At the next meeting, they would revisit key areas of weakness and failure and would encourage and pray for one another.

3. Maximize Use of Resources

The best use of resources will become a priority for organizations which "think systems." Here are some areas which stand out to us as urgently needing systems thinking:

Generation X newcomers often have a great deal to give

When we were young missionaries, newcomers were put in the "seen but not heard" category for at least two years. Nowadays, a healthy organization will recognize that their young missionaries have much to give. Many Generation Xers have had training in personnel management as a normal part of other training and have also experienced competent management

in secular employment. The examples of the missionary who started using evaluation forms and the accountability/fellowship group (see above) speak for themselves, as does the following example:

A couple in their first term were put in charge of field services and then of a large mission guesthouse with many related ministries. While their older predecessors had returned home severely burned out, this couple completed their assignment and arrived for their home assignment debriefing interview in high spirits, enthusiastic about returning to the same job. It emerged during the interview that before going overseas, the husband had been the project coordinator of a building company. Although he was a newcomer to overseas mission, his experience in people management and in accepting responsibility led to a satisfying and fruitful ministry—and a healthy guesthouse system.

Field leaders can't do it all

Too little time and training are common reasons for field leadership failure as pastoral carers. It is disillusioning for many Generation X newcomers to find people in leadership positions with very little knowledge of basic management procedures. All too often in the past, people have been thrust into leadership because of seniority or popularity with others in the missionary team. Many have reluctantly left the ministries to which they believe themselves to have been called and have been placed in administrative/personnel care positions for which they have not been trained.

Even those who have the training and skills find themselves with workloads too great to carry. "There is a huge demand for pastoral care all over our field," one field leader, close to tears, shared with us, "and every other field leader I talk to describes the same need. Most of us are close to burnout." This baby boomer leader was not critical of people needing pastoral care. He saw it as a legitimate need. However, he also saw that it was beyond him. He was trying at least to begin to address the need by appointing a missionary to pair people off for special care for one another. For those in isolated places, this was mainly by mail, but it was better than nothing. The systemic change needed in this case was to acknowledge that the average field leader usually has his hands full with administration and cannot also be held responsible for missionary pastoral care. One solution might be to set up a department led by trained personnel with people skills. Such people would be recruited for that purpose and would head a team of others set aside for pastoral care. Management and people skills training should be mandatory for all field leaders.

Many missionaries have pastoral care needs which are not being met

In the days of the booster missionary, the cry was, "What is the world coming to? What kind of missionaries need pastoral care? Surely the Lord is enough!" Thus, those with emotional problems concealed them until there was a crisis, and even then they were often advised to get their spiritual lives into shape. Thankfully, those days are now past. We are talking about caring for a generation of missionaries who choose mission organizations "because they seem the most caring" and whose greatest fear is working in an isolated place without the support of a team.

It is no longer good enough for us to say that we do not have the resources to care properly for our staff. If we do not do it, then we can expect impoverishment in ministry and loss of valuable workers.

But again, we have evidence that Generation Xers are right for today. Not only do they openly state their need for pastoral care, but they are also excellent at providing it for their peers. Thus, they are themselves important links in the pastoral care chain. They characteristically look out for and care for one another with sensitivity and compassion. We experienced this when one of us (Ruth) was suddenly called away from an orientation course in

another country because her mother was dying. One of the Generation X candidates, with tears in his eyes, presented Ruth with a big bunch of flowers as she was leaving and hugged her, assuring her of their prayers. This remains a vivid, heartwarming memory.

Many missionaries are not receiving regular evaluation and mentoring

Many Australian mission agencies currently have an accepted policy of holding an annual evaluation and an end-of-term interview for every missionary. However, the policy is only effective if field staff see that it is done and done competently. Done well, it is not only useful as a means of ministry development, but it is also a valuable form of pastoral care. A person skilled in the area can pick up signs of depression, discouragement, burnout, marital disharmony, and other issues. If such things are addressed early and competently, they can salvage missionary careers. Task-oriented, cognitive concrete thinkers are often not well suited to this ministry. It needs sensitivity to body language, the capacity to read between the lines, and the ability to reflect empathetically upon what is being said. But although listening empathetically is comforting, it is vital that the listener be in a position to bring about change or at least to give feedback about why change cannot be made. Most missionaries deplore having to fill out questionnaires and/or bare their hearts to leaders if they never see any results or receive any follow-up.

Miscasting of missionaries continues despite job descriptions

The tyranny of the urgent often seems to fly in the face of common sense in the desperate search to find someone—anyone—to fill a particular position. Probably this is a carry-over from the booster era. At the very best, posting without regard to a missionary's gifts and training may result in mediocrity; at the worst, there will be devastation all around. It is known that realistic job previews have an important influence on future commitment. Full and accurate information given prior to departure generates expectations. Where these are not fulfilled, commitment is likely to be eroded (Meyer, 1997). Thankfully, the baby boomers have taught us that Christian organizations, more than any, should be bent on excellence in every aspect of ministry. One person working in a ministry which suits his/her gifts and training is probably worth 10 who are floundering in a ministry for which they are not suited. Similarly, we should not accept people who are not trained well enough for the ministry in view.

The reality also needs to be faced that however well trained candidates may be, their performance in a cross-cultural situation cannot be predicted (McKaughan, 1997). Therefore, it is always going to be a good investment for both candidates and the mission to send them for short-term experience, so that everyone can see how it goes. We need to learn from the experience of those boosters who went sight unseen and discovered too late that they should never have gone.

Generation X teams actually work

In most missions, there are people at the grass-roots level who could take far more responsibility than they are given. Some forward-looking missions have actually given grass-roots teams major responsibility for recruitment, training, and pastoral care of personnel—and in fact for all decision making at the local level. Experienced regional supervisors visit regularly to act as consultants and mentors and, if need be, as mediators. Vital to the success of such programs are regular in-service training courses in team building and pastoral care. For missions that are doing these things, while there may be early difficulties, it seems a promising approach. The Generation X special capacity for in-depth mutual caring, already mentioned, is probably the key to success.

4. Have Open Communication

Open communication within organizations is one sign of a healthy system.

Who says why missionaries leave?

The reasons that missionaries give for leaving are often very different from those officially recorded (Brierley, 1997; Donovan & Myors, 1997b). This raises again the question of how much attention is given to the organization's part in missionaries' attrition. Where intention to resign is foreshadowed, there would be great value in giving missionaries ample opportunity to explain their reasons. Generation Xers can be relied upon to be very open and honest, and they look for the same from those with whom they're relating. The focus should be on both the person concerned and the organization's system. It may be that even at this stage, the situation can be rectified. Even if it cannot, the missionary will go away having been given an opportunity to be heard and having been treated fairly by the organization. At the same time, leaders have had opportunity to discover in the system problem areas needing to be addressed. Success in this interaction will depend on open communication and willingness to listen on both sides.

Regular review of all aspects of every missionary's life and ministry would allow problem areas, whether in the missionary or the organization's system, to be identified and addressed early.

Another way of identifying perceived deficits in care is by confidential survey of the organization's whole missionary team. Repeat surveys could then be used to assess progress when changes have been made. For example, addressing areas of dissatisfaction highlighted in Table 2, such as inadequacy of debriefing on home leave, could send a message to missionary staff that they belong to an organization that cares about their well-being. Organizational research suggests that perception that their organization is making an effort on their behalf is as important to employees as the actual help received (Meyer, 1997). Missionaries are not looking for the impossible, but they need to feel that their well-being is a matter of concern to their leaders.

What do you tell your missionaries?

In many Christian organizations, there seems to be a reluctance by some in leadership to disclose to those concerned the whole truth about perceived problem areas in their performance. This hesitancy is something affecting leaders at all levels. Some leaders have difficulty in confronting. Others seem to feel that it is kinder, more humane, or perhaps even more spiritual ("Christians should not be in conflict") to water down the truth. In fact, the opposite is the case. It is dehumanizing and deeply wounding for the people concerned. It is well known among people working with terminally ill patients that bad news is easier for most to handle than no news. Facing bad news very often helps people transcend their grief (McIntosh, 1974).

We have recently had contact with two families who were suddenly "invited to resign" by Christian organizations. In both cases, the employing organization had not been open about the reasons, and so the people concerned were angry and frustrated that they could not present their side of whatever the case was. They felt betrayed after years of ministry which they had thought was acceptable. Lack of open communication not only prevents appropriate closure, but also undermines trust in the organization. Worst of all, it leaves matters unresolved and so detracts from capacity for future ministry. These problems might be addressed, at least in part, by teaching leaders improved methods of communication and conflict resolution, along with ways of handling grief and loss.

5. Match Worldview

A healthy organization system matches the way it does mission to the worldview of Generation X. It is clear from much that has been said already that Generation X members were made for a systems approach. They are experienced in it. They understand their part in it. They are committed to it. Organizations could benefit greatly by receiving what these individuals have to offer and by changing their way of doing things to signal to them that this is an organization in which Xers would feel comfortable. Few things speak more loudly than a team approach at every stage of missionary life and an acknowledgement of the foundational need for good pastoral care, beginning with a willingness to recruit teams and train them as a group. Participative leadership and the priority given to short-term experience programs also speak of an understanding and validation of the Generation X worldview. Finally, all measures taken to build relationships and to inspire candidates with the organization's vision will resonate with today's young missionaries. All of these things are part and parcel of a systems approach to mission in a postmodern world—an approach which really works.

Conclusion

The reinvented commitment called for today involves a significant change by organizations in the way they do mission. It means a commitment by the organization to the missionary at a depth matching the missionary's commitment to the organization. For too long, organizational commitment has been assumed to be mainly the missionary's responsibility. Organizational commitment involves emotional attachment and a shared vision. Generation X members have great capacity for both. However, for maximum effectiveness and perseverance in ministry, they need to know that the organization is committed to them.

If organizations could really grasp the potential of a systems approach in their thinking about mission, remarkable changes would follow. In the first place, the quality of life of every member would be likely to improve, and better use would be made of existing resources. In the second place, there would be the unexpected bonus of the contribution of the systems-thinking Generation X individuals. For them, there would be a new freedom and empowerment for ministry, leading inevitably to a deepening trust and commitment both ways.

Reflection and Discussion

1. What characteristics of Generation Xers help them to fit into developing churches?

2. Consider the case described in this article, of the young, single, first-term missionary who was sent to teach English at a university in a closed country. In what ways did the organizational system fail him? What could have been done better on his behalf?

3. What could be done to give Generation X members a greater sense of belonging to and identifying with the vision of your organization?

4. For high-quality organizational commitment, who in general needs to accommodate most—Generation X missionaries or organizations? Why?

5. How would an organization with a healthy system support its field leaders?

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Running Well and Resting Well: Twelve Tools For Missionary Life

Kelly O'Donnell
Michèle Lewis O'Donnell

Mission personnel need a variety of supportive resources to help them grow personally and remain effective. This chapter presents 12 tools that missionaries can use during the different phases of missionary life. These tools can be adapted for your use.

There are two metaphors in the book of Hebrews which are especially relevant for mission personnel. These metaphors are the intertwining, balancing concepts of running with endurance the race set before us (Heb. 12:1-2) and being diligent to enter into God's rest (Heb. 4:9-11). Simply put, we need to "run well" and "rest well."

Running well involves staying focused on Jesus, so that we are not distracted by anything which hinders our life with and work for Him. Resting well means embracing the atoning work of Christ, so that in knowing His deep love for us, we can be at peace with and renewed in Him. Both of these concepts are foundational for our health throughout the various phases of the missionary life cycle. From recruitment through retirement, they impart a healthy balance between our "doing" and "being."

The same discipline that Paul said is needed to "run to win" (1 Cor. 9:24-27) is also needed so that we can "rest to win" (Matt. 11:25-30). Think of member care as a discipline. It is a personal, community, and specialized practice—an *intentional* practice—to help renew us and to help us remain resilient.

In this chapter, we share 12 growth tools for individuals, couples, teams, families, departments, and organizations. These tools can be used during the various stages of the missionary life cycle:

- Pre-field—recruitment, selection/candidacy, deputation, training.
- Field—first term, additional terms, change in job/location/organization.
- Reentry—furlough, home assignment, returning to the field later in life.
- Post-field—end of service, retirement.

For additional information on the missionary life cycle, as well as exercises for personal growth, see Morgan, 2001; O'Donnell, 1988, 1992; chapter 23 of this volume on helping ourselves and others, especially the CHOPS Inventory; and chapter 38 on team resiliency, including the reference section.

1. Selection Criteria: Eleven Cs for the Seven Seas

This worksheet explores 11 important factors which should be assessed before one becomes part of an organization or a team. Each criterion begins with the letter "C"—hence the name of the worksheet. The worksheet can be used for screening potential workers. Individuals who are considering becoming candidates can use the form, as well as organizations. Newly formed teams can also use this exercise as a point of departure to discuss who they are, their backgrounds, and their motivations and expectations for the team. In addition, the worksheet can be useful for teams going through a major transition period, such as a change in goals or the addition of new members.

- *Calling*—to a job/profession, to a country, to a people, to the organization, to the team, spiritual "call."
- *Character*—emotional stability, resiliency, strong and weak points.
- *Competence*—gifts and skills, training, preparation, experience.
- *Commitment*—to "calling," job, cross-cultural work, organization, team, people.
- *Christian experience*—spirituality, previous related work.
- *Cross-cultural experience*—experience living and relating with people from different cultures.
- *Compatibility*—with team goals, organizational ethos and doctrine, cultural, relational, spoken and unspoken expectations.
- *Confirmation*—from family, friends, organization, church, inner peace.
- *Corporal health*—overall physical wellness.
- *Cash*—financial assets, overall financial support system.
- *Care network*—friends and senders who will provide encouragement and support.

2. Screening for Workers: Ten Areas for Assessing Suitability for Service

This material is based on a modified clinical interview to help identify significant personal problems in potential staff. We developed this sheet in response to the requests of several field leaders who were in isolated settings and who could not easily consult with a mental health specialist. Many of these leaders were dealing with team members who had never been adequately screened and whose personal problems were disrupting team life. This material is intended to be used by mission leaders with personnel responsibility and training. Note, though, that in some countries such as the USA, there are legal requirements against discrimination in the selection process based on mental or other disabilities. Also, job-related skills are the focus of assessment, rather than personal struggles or mental disorder.

Some Suggestions

During the interview process, try to make the experience as supportive as possible. Remember, in some ways you and the candidate may be interviewing each other, as the candidate is also assessing the work setting. Be friendly, and establish rapport. Remember to ask questions in a non-threatening way, highlighting the person's strengths, though not being afraid to ask hard questions. Be sensitive to the person's cultural background and possible need for a translator. Clearly state the conditions for confidentiality, the purpose and procedure for the interview, and how the shared information will be used.

Avoid making quick judgments concerning suitability based only on first impressions. Remember that the best predictor of future behavior is past behavior, so be sure to explore previous experiences. Ask for specific examples, and do not be content with vague or general answers. Be sure to use this sheet in conjunction with references, past performance appraisals, an interview with the spouse, and a thorough application form that also includes questions about children (behavioral problems, anxiety or emotional struggles, peer relationships, developmental delays, learning difficulties). Whenever possible, seek out the advice of a mental health professional, even if it be through email. Finally, the main concern is not that a person may have struggles, but what he/she is doing to grow and help resolve such struggles.

1. Current Interests and Concerns

- How do you spend your time?
- What things do you most like to do?
- Favorite reading materials/books?
- How are you feeling these days?
- Do you have any problems sleeping or eating?
- Any medical problems?
- Are you using medication?
- How are your diet and nutrition?
- Would you like to share about any personal concerns or struggles? (Establish rapport and ease into the interview. Maybe save this question until later—see point 4 below—although if the candidate is going through a current crisis, talking about it right away may be helpful.)

2. Relationships

Evaluate how the candidate will do in a team setting and under stressful circumstances:

- Describe the quality of your relationships with others—friends, leaders, colleagues, spouse, and children.
- Any marital problems?
- What are some marital strengths?
- Describe some positive and negative past team experiences.
- Is it easy or difficult for you to forgive someone? Give examples.
- Discuss your relationship with leadership/authorities.

3. Family History

Explore what family issues/dysfunctions—both current family and family of origin—the candidate might be bringing with him/her:

- Have any family members suffered from a serious mental disorder?
- Marital instability?
- Child abuse, alcoholism, or general family dysfunction?
- What do people in your family think about your work?

4. Clinical Problems

- Is there any past or current history of any of the following?
  - Depression (significant times of feeling worthless, helpless, discouraged).
  - Anxiety (excessive concern about a person, event, situation).
  - Phobias (unusual fears of people, objects, experiences).
  - Bulimia/anorexia (problems with eating and purging or simply not eating, accompanied by weight changes).
  - Suicidal ideas/trying to hurt self or others.
  - Sexual addictions (pornography, compulsive masturbation, etc.).
  - Violence/poor anger management.
  - Substance abuse/addiction (including large doses of coffee/tea).
  - Gambling addictions/poor money management.
  - Delusions and hallucinations (significant problems in the way the candidate thinks or perceives the world—e.g., preoccupation with being persecuted or followed, exaggerated sense of importance/grandiosity).

- Learning disabilities (e.g., significant problems with reading/writing).
- Previous traumas.
- Burnout (being incapacitated physically and emotionally due to chronic levels of stress).
- Unwanted habits.
- Grief and bereavement (loss due to death, multiple moves, job change, etc.).
- Hormonal imbalance.
- Legal problems/arrests.
- Occult involvement.

■ Have you tried to get help in these areas? If so, how? (You may have to define these conditions in terms of specific symptoms, but it is very important to explore these areas in concrete ways. Some areas to probe which could uncover problems include sleep activity, interest in things one usually enjoys, guilt, energy, time with friends, fears, concentration, appetite, and sexuality.)

5. Previous Help/Treatment

Determine if the person has been under the care of medical or mental health professionals. For how long and for what reasons? Do not gloss over this area!

■ Have you had any psychiatric hospitalizations or outpatient therapy?

■ Any medical problems/surgery or head traumas?

6. Work Performance

How might the person fit into the new work setting, given past work experiences and preferences?

■ What setting will you be working in, and what types of stressors will you face?

■ How have you done in past work positions?

■ Discuss reasons for leaving previous jobs.

■ Identify the type of leadership with which you work best.

■ What types of leadership experiences and positions have you had?

■ Refer to results of previous testing, if known.

7. Spiritual Issues

Look for honest appraisal of spirituality, not getting too spiritual or overemphasizing either their importance or what God is doing through them:

■ How is your relationship with God?

■ How much time do you spend in prayer and Bible reading each day/week?

■ How much fellowship with Christians do you have?

■ Describe your involvement in a church.

■ Describe any areas in which you feel "stuck."

8. Personal Characteristics

Explore the candidate's capacity for openness and insight:

■ Identify a few personal qualities that are positive and some that are negative.

■ How might your positive characteristics help or hinder a team/setting where you might work?

9. Observations During Interview

Note the candidate's appearance, clothing, hygiene, facial expressions, behavior, unusual mannerisms, emotions displayed, speech/unusual words, thought content, eye contact, posture. How does the person relate to you? Can you connect with him/her interpersonally? What is your "gut level" feeling? (Beware of your own possible distortions/biases!)

10. Additional Comments

Make additional comments, discuss other assessment areas, and answer any questions the candidate may have for you.

3. Thirteen Survival Premises/Promises*

Have you ever had a look at your assumptions regarding what it takes to do well in missions? We all have certain assumptions about how life and missions work. Let's explore some of them. Read through the 13 statements below. Which ones make sense to you? What other assumptions would you list? Try doing this together as a group exercise with your team or department. How do these items apply to your life?

1. Life is difficult, regardless of where you are located and what you are doing. Only people trying to sell you something might say something different.
2. We are created human and are called to be mission workers, not the other way around. A human doing is not a human being.
3. Failure and casualties are inevitable in mission work.
4. The grass might be greener on the other side, but the manure is just as deep.
5. You can try to do anything in life you want; you only have to face the consequences.
6. With enough time and effort, we still cannot accomplish everything that we want.
7. The ideal team member never joins a team.
8. The healthy are usually too healthy to become frontline workers.
9. You are really someone special, but you are really not so special.
10. More people would be involved in missions if there were more unreached people groups in Switzerland and Hawaii.
11. You may never know why.
12. You probably have many other assumptions, some of which you may not be aware of.
13. These 13 premises are actually promises.

4. Some Core Challenges of Missionaries

This is a discussion tool to explore some of the core issues of missionary life. It can be used by individuals or groups. By "core" we mean those inner struggles that we wrestle with—the matters of the heart—which are often stimulated by external circumstances or problems. Try to identify how each of these issues is or has been part of your life, your family, and/or your team. What helps you work through these issues? What other areas would you include as being core challenges?

- *Lack of forgiveness*—holding on to perceived injustices which arise from conflict with colleagues, the host culture, frustration with oneself, etc.
- *Staying centered*—remaining connected with self and God in the midst of many responsibilities and the demands of living.
- *Focusing on your own interests*—self-preoccupation to the exclusion of others' needs; not checking to see how people around you are doing.
- *Drifting*—getting off the main tasks and the reason you work in missions via distractions, interruptions, avoiding responsibility, etc.
- *Transitional grief*—the pain from saying many good-byes, multiple moves, missing loved ones, unresolved relationship issues, etc.
- *Contentment*—being satisfied in knowing that you are obeying God in spite of minimal work results, pressures to perform, and limited sense of fulfillment in your work.
- *Pessimism*—losing perspective on the good things in life subsequent to the chronic exposure to human problems and misery.
- *The Midlife Club*—searching for "greener grass on the other side of the fence," often characteristic of those in mid-

* Originally published in the special member care issue of the *International Journal of Frontier Missions* (O'Donnell, 1995). Used by permission.

life and in missions for 10-plus years. Some examples:

- *Club Mediterranean*—"Yes, God, I hear you calling me to work with the affluent in the Bahamas and Beverly Hills. Please?"
- *Club Mediocrity*—"I am out of touch with my field and the work world back home. What can I do? I am out of date. I guess I have nowhere else to go except to stay in missions."
- *Club Middle Manager*—"God is calling me now to supervise others, after having worked on the field for awhile. Great, I was getting tired of it anyway. Now I'll be a consultant in a 'safer' position. I can help from afar, help from a computer screen, and help support the missions 'machine.' Hey, I can tell younger people what to do."
- *Club Midlife Bulge*—"I don't wanna do nothin'. I've earned the break and the fancy car. I've put in my time. I just wanna get fat."
- *Club Miscellaneous*—list your favorite club(s) here. Some examples:
  - *Club Martyr*—"I need to 'club' myself and feel perpetually guilty for something I did or did not do in the past."
  - *Club Martini*—"I probably won't admit it, but I am developing a compulsive habit to avoid dealing with inner areas of pain, such as the reality of aging, limited achievement, ongoing family tensions, etc., and covering up the pain by seeking out experiences that sedate or stimulate me."

5.
Personal Growth Plan*

The purpose of this exercise is to plan for, stimulate, and monitor your own growth—growth in your character, skills, and spirituality. Complete this worksheet (or something like it) once a year, and talk about it with a friend or leader.

Part 1: Personal Profile

1. List your current interests—things you do which give you personal satisfaction and pleasure (e.g., reading, sports, music).

2. List your current dislikes—things you do which you do not enjoy or which you feel you are not good at (e.g., teaching, poor habits, exercise).

3. Describe a few of your strengths.

4. Describe some of your limitations and growth areas.

5. List your current work responsibilities. Summarize your job clearly in one sentence.

6. List any other responsibilities you have (personal, professional, social, family).

7. How do your current responsibilities compare with your stated interests/strengths and limitations/dislikes?

8. What would you like to be doing in the next five years? Write a brief statement about your future roles and responsibilities—both personal and work-related.

9. What are you doing to further your spiritual life? Be specific. List areas of struggle.

10. What helps you maintain emotional stability and keeps you emotionally healthy? What do you do and how often?

11. In what ways do you continue your learning and build upon your strengths/skills?

12. Describe your relationship with your family here/back home. Any areas to improve?

13. Describe your relationship with your team/department/work/community. Any areas to improve?

14. Describe your relationship with the local community/nationals. Any areas to improve?

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* This exercise is based on an initial self-assessment tool put together by the Personnel Department of the U.S. Center for World Missions in Pasadena, California. Used by permission.

Part 2: Personal and Professional Development Plan

Based on your previous answers, identify at least five specific objectives that you want to accomplish in the next 12 months. Choose objectives that are reasonably obtainable and that can be measured. Set dates for when you want to have them completed (e.g., lose five kilograms by September 1, read two books on cross-cultural relief work within the next three months, raise financial support level by 25% by the end of the year). Outline the steps you will take to accomplish each objective. Be specific. Also describe how you will evaluate your progress. Here is a short example:

Objective 1: Send newsletters to 50 friends three times a year.

Date: Mail newsletters in late April, August, and December.

Strategy: Address envelopes in advance; keep newsletter to two pages; revise it twice; include a one-page insert of interest.

Assessment: Show team leader each newsletter; ask for feedback from a few supporters on the content and style of the newsletter.

6. Job Feedback Form

This form will help you look at how your overall team/department is doing. It is intended to stimulate mutual feedback between you and your supervisor/leader and between group members when done as a joint exercise. It is also meant to complement but not to replace the use of performance appraisals. It is hoped that your assessment will lead to constructive changes for you and your work. Use a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree, to rate the 15 areas that follow. Feel free to make additional comments for any of the items.

____ 1. The objectives of my team/department are clear to me.
____ 2. The objectives were formed with ample discussion and prayer.
____ 3. I am involved in the decision-making process in my work area.
____ 4. We meet often enough as a group.
____ 5. There is a good sense of team spirit in our work.
____ 6. The communication process is adequate within our group.
____ 7. I understand what is expected of me.
____ 8. I receive timely and sufficient feedback on my work.
____ 9. I feel respected and encouraged by my leader/supervisor.
____ 10. I feel encouraged and respected by my colleagues.
____ 11. I regularly try to encourage and support my colleagues.
____ 12. My communication with my leader/supervisor is adequate.
____ 13. I have sufficient time to fulfill my responsibilities.
____ 14. I am growing as a person as a result of my work involvement.
____ 15. Overall, I am satisfied with and enjoy my work.

- Find your overall rating (total score divided by 15). Then find the composite score for your group (total scores divided by 15, then divided by the number of people in the group).
- Make any additional comments on the following areas:
  - Ways to improve the work we do.
  - Ways to work better as a team.
  - Personal areas/struggles for me that affect my work.
  - Any additional concerns or suggestions.

7. Routine Debriefing Interview*

The purpose of a debriefing session is to help a worker review his/her experience on the job. This debriefing is more of a routine nature and is not intended to be used with crisis workers or those who go through a traumatic event. During routine debriefing, the worker is given the opportunity to express feelings, explore the high and low points of work, express concerns, put more closure on unresolved areas, and get a better perspective on the overall experience. The interviewer's role is to listen and help clarify, being careful to make sure the worker addresses the relevant aspects of his/her work. Debriefing does not involve counseling or performance evaluation. Keep these separate.

1. General

- What were a few rewarding aspects of your time there? Why?
- What were a few disappointing aspects of your time there? What could have prevented these or encouraged you more?

2. Work

- Summarize your job responsibilities while there.
- Was your job challenging and rewarding to you? Explain.
- How were you able to exercise your gifts and abilities?
- Are you satisfied with your contribution to your work/team?
- How was your health? How did it affect your work?
- How was your financial support level?

3. Language/Culture

- What aspects of the culture did you enjoy the most? Why?
- What aspects of the culture were the hardest for you (practices, beliefs, values)?
- What was language learning like for you? Any suggestions for improvement?
- Describe the relationships you were able to develop with nationals.
- How did the cultural and language adjustment affect your self-concept; relationship with your spouse/person with whom you live/work partner; parenting; relationship with your teammates; relationship with your team/work leader?

4. Personal

- What have you learned the most about yourself during your time there?
- Have you seen or developed any new strengths?
- Are you aware of any weaknesses that surfaced?

5. Spiritual

- In what ways have you grown spiritually—what have you learned, and how was your relationship with God?

6. Closing

- What are your plans for furlough/returning to your home?
- How could your sponsoring agency encourage/support you during this time?
- Is there anything about your next assignment that you would like to discuss?
- Is there anything else that you want to share about your time?
- Do you have any other comments or recommendations for the sponsoring organization?

Close by expressing gratitude for their work and who they are. Affirm them and their contributions.

7. Interviewer's Comments and Recommendations

Add any comments and recommendations here.

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* This is a generic form that was developed by the organization Frontiers, which we have adapted. Used by permission.

8.
Priority Time for Busy Couples

Priority time is a commitment made by a husband and wife to one another to spend a minimum of two hours a week specifically sharing their lives together.

The demands of missions sometimes place extra pressures on marriage relationships. This means we need to give the relationship special attention. Many couples find that unless they commit themselves to have a pre-arranged time of meeting together, communication gets neglected within the marriage, and their relationship declines.

The time needs to be scheduled to avoid interruption, e.g., at a time when children are asleep or at school. It should be planned together to fit with each other's schedules.

Suggestions of What to Do During Priority Time*

- Read together and discuss a book about marriage or family.
- Go out for a walk, or go out for coffee and cake or a meal. Relax together.
- Ask each other, "What pressures do you feel you have been under recently?" Pray for each other. Don't counsel each other. Listen closely and pray!
- Pray for one another's service for the Lord. Try to help each other identify your respective spiritual gifts and talents. Discuss how you can help one another be more effective in your service for the Lord.
- Discuss and pray about your financial needs and your giving to others.
- Discuss the needs of your children. Pray for them: for character growth, for their relationship with the Lord, for their relationship with their friends, for their school activities, etc.
- Ask each other the question, "Have I hurt you by anything I've said or done recently?" Resolve any of these hurts that may have occurred by asking for forgiveness and forgiving one another.
- Each write down what you think your partner's main character strengths are; then share them with each other. Encourage one another.
- Each write down what you think are your own personal character weaknesses. Ask your partner to pray for God to strengthen you in these areas of weakness.
- Play a game together.

Application

Set time aside to discuss the above suggestions with your marriage partner. Decide on a time when you could meet regularly and begin to do some of the things suggested.

Get together with the married couples on your team or in your area. Encourage each other to share some of the pressures that you feel in your marriage relationships. Help each other by sharing how you have handled these pressures.

We have found that partnering with another couple for mutual growth and accountability is key to make sure that priority times are successful.

We also like to encourage couples to start out their priority time with a tool developed by the Maces (1977) in *How to Have a Happy Marriage,* which looks at how much marital potential a couple thinks they have already developed. Each of the items below is scored on a scale from 1 to 10. The higher the score, the more potential is felt to have been fulfilled. It is the marriage that is being scored, not the individuals. This is done individually and then shared/compared with each other. A good discussion then usually ensues. Additional items can be added that are relevant to your situation.

- Common goals and values.
- Communication skills.
- Effective ways of handling conflict.

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* This material is from Barry Austin's (1995) resource manual, *Personnel Development and Pastoral Care for YWAM Staff*. Used by permission.

- Commitment to growth of the marriage relationship.
- Expressions of appreciation and affection.
- Cooperation.
- Agreement on gender roles.
- Sexual fulfillment.
- Money management.
- Time management.
- Decision making.
- Interaction with children.
- Interaction with extended family.
- Issues of health—exercise, nutrition, etc.
- Involvement with work or leisure activities.
- Spiritual growth.

9. Family Scenarios

Read through the three fictitious scenarios below. Respond to the question at the end of each scenario as if you were a mission leader, a member care consultant, or a friend.

Scenario 1

An Asian family is having trouble dealing with stress while going through the orientation program of their agency. The program takes place in a North African country and requires that the participants move to a new city every two to four weeks over a three-month period. The parents are concerned that they have been moving around too much, both pre-field and now during orientation, and that their two children are suffering as a consequence. Their girl, age 8, has started wetting the bed three times a week at night. Their boy, age 2, is not eating much food.

- What could be done to help this family?

Scenario 2

A five-year-old boy from Europe does not want to go to his Portuguese-speaking primary school in Luanda, Angola, which he has been attending for two months. He is in preschool and complains that some of the other kids make fun of him by sticking out their tongues at him and saying that his drawings are ugly. For the last month, the boy has often whined and complained while getting ready for school. When he returns from school, it is hard for his parents to make contact with him, and he acts mean towards other family members.

- How would you help this boy?

Scenario 3

A couple with no children are having marital problems. They have been working on a team as agricultural tentmakers among an Asian group for the past five years. The husband is Nigerian, and the wife is from Côte d'Ivoire. The work is going well, but the long hours needed to travel and provide assistance have affected their relationship—or so they say. Both acknowledge that they have come from difficult family backgrounds, in which there was alcoholism, some spiritistic practices, and poor parental modeling of conflict resolution. They saw a counselor back in Côte d'Ivoire while on furlough, and they attended a marriage retreat on the field, but no lasting changes have occurred. The wife's relationships with the local women are significant, and she is having an impact in their lives. The husband has no close relationships outside of his work and is wondering if he is in a midlife crisis. The agency decides to let them continue on the field and to do the best they can until they can get some more help somewhere.

- How would you try to help this couple?

10. Career Consultation Cases

The two fictitious cases that follow look at some of the personal, work, and career issues facing cross-cultural workers. Read through the cases, and respond to the questions below. You are the member care consultant!

Case 1

Fred is 30 years old, married to Betty, and they have two kids—Sam, age 6, and Mary, age 4. They are Canadians. One year ago, they moved to an Asian country to provide some needed services to the people there. Fred was able to get a job as an English teacher at a university, teaching eight hours of class per week. Previously, he was an insurance salesperson. He has about 12 hours of preparation each week (correcting papers, planning lessons, and doing clerical tasks). Betty home schools Sam and basically is a house mom.

The climate is extreme—very hot in the summer and very cold in the winter. Because of this, some of the family's usual outdoor activities—such as walking together—are limited. They live in a two-bedroom apartment in a city of 100,000 people.

Fred and Betty study the local language each week, and they like practicing it with neighbors and in the market. They are not able to engage in much discussion yet, due to their language limitations. They are on email. Their financial support is adequate (they have a sponsoring agency to help support them), and they have no significant culture shock, although they miss friends and relatives.

They are part of an expatriate group of 10 that meets together for mutual support. They get along with the coordinator and other members. Twice a month, they get together for a two-hour meeting to discuss adjustment issues and exchange stories and advice. Fred enjoys helping to coordinate part of the discussion times.

Betty likes being a mom and is basically content in the new country (her first extended time overseas). Fred, though, is becoming restless, as he would really like to be doing more outside things in the host community (meeting people, talking about important matters of concern to the local people) and less time teaching English. Teaching English to internationals would probably be Fred's 20th job choice back in Canada. Fred is on a two-year contract, and it would not be possible to change jobs.

Fred sends an email message to you as his member care consultant, asking for your advice. Consider these questions in your response:

- What issues are present—what is really going on in this case?
- What materials and interventions would help?
- What additional information is needed?
- Are there any ethical, family, or organizational issues? If so, discuss these.
- How is this case similar to other situations of which you are aware?

Case 2

Dear Member Care Consultant,

I am writing to see if you could help me with some of my job-related struggles. My name is Theresa Worker, and for the past several months I have been disenchanted with my work. I would appreciate any advice and suggestions you could give me. Thanks.

Let me first give you a bit of my background and then ask you some questions. Here goes. I have worked for an international aid agency for five years. During this time, I have worked in three different settings: I helped administer two training schools, did secretarial work, and participated on a three-month relief team. I am single, Australian, aged 26, female, and am presently working at one of the agency offices in Europe while I try to sort out what I want to do. I completed two years of university prior to joining the company and am also fairly fluent in German. Do you need any additional information about me? Please let me know. Now for my questions:

- How do I know if I am effectively doing what someone in cross-cultural and humanitarian work does?
- How do I assess my strengths/weaknesses as a worker when I have worked in different settings and transitioned so much over the last five years?

- How can I set goals for the future to be more effective?
- How do I know the type of job in which I can work best?
- Do other people go through this type of frustrating experience?

In the past, I think I have been too flexible with regards to my work preferences within our company—that is, I have often worked in jobs because no one else was available to do them, and I felt it was right just to try to fill in. I would really appreciate your help as I try to assess my capabilities and involvement in this work.

Sincerely yours,
Theresa Worker

11. Crisis Intervention and Contingency Management

Workers who serve in cross-cultural settings are often subject to a variety of extreme stressors. Natural disasters, wars, sudden relocation, imprisonment, and sickness are but a few of the examples. Agencies that send their people into potentially adverse situations have an ethical responsibility to do all they can to prepare and support them. Here are four steps to help organizations better prepare for and manage crisis situations. Note that each step involves three levels of responsibility that need to be clarified: individual, organizational, and outside consultants. The four steps also overlap as you go about implementing them.

Step 1: Preparation

- *Contingency plans*—for individuals, families, teams, agencies, regions.
  - Risk assessment and management—monitoring at-risk zones.
  - Forming plans—hostage situations, natural disasters, evacuation, assault, moral failure.
  - Estate planning—writing a will, organizing and safeguarding important documents, etc.
- *Stress training*—developing coping skills via *in vivo* experiences (e.g., firearms, emergency rooms at hospitals) and simulation exercises, case studies, teaching, personal examples/reflections.
- *Pre-field and field orientation*—security guidelines, do's and don'ts, adjustment helps.

Step 2: Staying Alive

- *Using survival skills to stay alive, healthy, and sane*—to manage oneself, resources, and relationships.
- *Crisis management teams*—to monitor and make decisions during the crisis.
- *Human rights advocacy*—to use moral, legal, and political pressure.

Step 3: Crisis Intervention

- *Practical help to stabilize/protect*—ensure safety; provide food, shelter, and money.
- *Critical incident stress debriefing*—express thoughts and feelings related to the crisis.
- *Brief supportive counseling*—as needed for those affected by the critical incident(s).

Step 4: Aftercare

- *Therapy/counseling*—help with anxiety/PTSD and other adjustment problems.
- *Organizational review*—evaluate the causes, interventions, results/lessons of the crisis.
- *Follow-up*—contact those affected, implement suggested changes.

How to Use These Steps

- Use these steps as a grid—like a checklist—to consider your team/organization's readiness to handle adverse situations.
- Discuss this grid within your setting—team, organization, etc. Read through and discuss some key articles on crisis and contingency management within your respective agencies and settings. (See chapter 44 for references.)

- Take time to identify the types of crises your people are likely to face; identify some acceptable approaches to handling crises and providing care and follow-up; identify available resources to help.
- Review one or two crisis situations you have already had, discussing what was done well, what could have been done better, and the implications of each past experience for future situations.
- As a group exercise, refer to Goode (1995), and interact on the crisis intervention scenarios found at the end of his article.

12. Reentry Preparation

Returning to your home country can be an exciting and enriching experience! Whether your return is for a brief period of time, such as for furlough, or possibly permanently, adequate preparation is needed to get the most out of your life back home.

Preparation requires taking a close look at four areas:

- Who you are as a person.
- How you and your home culture may have changed.
- Your plans and goals when you are at home.
- Your strategies for adjustment.

The reentry process can be a bit like culture shock, in that you are called to meet basic needs in different and sometimes unfamiliar ways. Much of the stress experienced is brought on by returning to a setting—which includes family, friends, and work—that is presumed to be familiar. Often, the unexpected nature and the subtlety of changes in the setting are what create the greatest amount of stress.

In short, your way of thinking and doing things has changed. Sometimes it takes readjusting to your home culture to shed light on the nature of these changes.

Some common struggles during reentry include feeling disoriented and out of place, disillusionment, irritation with others and with certain aspects of the culture, a sense of loneliness or isolation, and depression. On the other hand, reentry can be a very positive experience, with minimal adjustment struggles. So do not let this list of struggles overwhelm you. Just be aware of them and prepare!

As you make preparations to return to your home country, we encourage you to reflect on a promise: "I will not in any way fail you nor give you up nor leave you without support. I will not, I will not, I will not in any degree leave you helpless, nor forsake nor let you down. Assuredly not!" (Heb. 13:15, Amplified).

Reentry Assessment

Several factors typically influence the adjustment process of workers returning to their home country. These factors involve your relationship with both the host culture and your original home culture, as well as some of your individual characteristics.

Respond to each of the 15 items on this worksheet to help you explore what reentry might be like for you. You might also want to do this exercise with/for other family members.

Host country

1. How long have you been away from your home country? Where have you lived since then?
2. In what ways have you identified with the host culture (language, customs, values, beliefs, dress, etc.)?
3. In what ways are the host culture and your home country similar and dissimilar (climate, geography, language, religion, standard of living, politics, customs, etc.)?
4. How fulfilled do you feel in your work and overall experience? What has it been like for you?
5. What do you think it will be like to be away from the host culture (saying good-bye to friends and places, stopping work)?

Worker characteristics

6. Describe your physical health, including stamina, nutrition, eating habits, medical problems, stress levels, and exercise.

7. Identify a few personal qualities that may help or hinder your adjustment back home. Discuss these with a trusted friend.

8. Have you or a friend noticed any important changes in how you think or behave since living in the host culture? List them.

9. Describe other transitions that you or family members are going through (recent marriage, childbirth, children leaving home, entering midlife or retirement, deaths).

10. How have you practically prepared for your return to your country of origin?

Home culture

11. How long will you be staying in your country of origin? List a few things that you think have changed for your family, friends, and home country. How might these impact you?

12. Describe the primary purposes/expectations for your return.

13. What have any previous reentry experiences been like? How can these past experiences help your upcoming reentry time?

14. To what extent have you stayed updated on events and changes back home (via reading, news, letters, phone calls, email, etc.)?

15. Describe the type of support groups you have back home (family, friends, work). How could they help you? With whom could you comfortably discuss your reentry experience?

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31

A Guest In Their World

KAREN CARR

Personal qualities and professional skills go hand in hand in working effectively in member care. Humility, cross-cultural sensitivity, a close walk with the Lord, and a commitment to be a learner are integral to the services which member care specialists provide. This is certainly true of mental health professionals working with mission personnel, as the five case studies in this chapter illustrate.

I am a clinical psychologist working full-time in the world of missions. I have discovered that there are certain values and assumptions that can serve as either bridges or roadblocks in the relationship between mental health professionals and mission administrators. Therapists or mental health consultants who want to work overseas with missionaries may need a new and different paradigm from the one they were given in their training programs, unless they have been a part of a program which is uniquely designed to equip mental health professionals for Christian service overseas.

I was trained in a secular clinical psychology program that was designed to prepare me for work in middle class America. In my program, I was taught to be an expert, but as Christians in this world, we must be servants and learners. I was taught to be non-directive and vague, but as Christian counselors, we must have something practical and tangible to offer. I was taught about confidentiality and advocacy, but not so much about their limits. I was taught about objectivity and about not having dual relationships, but then again my internship was not in a remote city of Africa. I learned secular theories regarding psychopathology that did not acknowledge the role of the soul and certainly not the healing power of the Lord. My missionary colleagues have taught me new lessons, and I'd like to share a few of them in this article.

It seems that the missions world has become much more open to the contribution and influence of the member care field and especially of mental health professionals, who are the focus of this article. Mental health professionals are needed and wanted in the missions community. Most often, they are used at the screening phase, but more are

also being invited to come to the field to provide workshops, crisis intervention, or short-term counseling. These visits have the potential to encourage and build up (1 Thess. 5:11). Sometimes, however, they result in a mission administrator developing a fairly negative view of mental health professionals in general. Some of the things contributing to this negative view are the use of jargon, an absence of recognizable integration of faith and practice, a style of therapy that may not be contextually appropriate, and a misperception of the role and motives of mission administrators.

The following case studies illustrate how some of these barriers may develop. They are composites, and all names are fictitious.

Case Study 1

Dr. Tom Jenkins, a clinical psychologist, has a brother on the field and offers to provide a workshop and counseling for missionaries during the two weeks that he will be there visiting his brother. The director accepts his offer and asks him to send a brief resume for field members to read before he arrives. In his resume, Dr. Jenkins emphasizes his degree and explains that he uses a cognitive-behavioral theoretical approach. When he arrives on the field, he presents himself as an expert, describing his professional achievements in his home country.

While these credentials carry a certain weight and importance, they are not the leading quality that will bring trust or confidence from the missionary clientele. What may bring credibility on a standard resume or for a professional conference could raise more suspicion than acceptance in the missions world. While our degrees and areas of expertise and theoretical orientations are important to us (and maybe our colleagues), they will not generally impress one whose life experience may far exceed our own. Our credentials are relevant, but not as relevant as our cross-cultural understanding. Our language, whether written or verbal, needs to make a cultural shift, from an emphasis on professional expertise and clinical knowledge, to an emphasis on teachability, cultural sensitivity, and biblical understanding which reflect a genuine care for missionaries. In short, we must enter their world.

While he is on the field, Dr. Jenkins does a stress management workshop in which he gives tips on lowering stress levels. He suggests separating work from home life and maintaining firm margins and boundaries. He does not realize that there are rarely clear distinctions between work and home life in the average missionary's life. Dr. Jenkins explains the current theories on stress management, but he does not offer a scriptural basis in his teaching, nor does he promote a discussion on how spiritual resources are effective in managing stress on the field. He says little about his relationship with the Lord or any previous cross-cultural experience. As he works individually with missionaries who have been through recent losses and trauma, he discusses the impact on their job performance and their families. He does not draw out the spiritual dimensions of their grief, nor does he appreciate the depth of their struggle to give themselves permission to grieve their own losses when their national colleagues have suffered far more in their eyes.

If we are to be helpful in the culture of missions, we must have a well-grounded, deep, abiding trust in the Lord that permeates every aspect of our professional selves and naturally builds bridges, as we articulate our integration of faith and practice. This will manifest itself in a style that is genuinely humble and respectful, while also being competent and capable.

Case Study 2

Dr. Rashe Lui, a professional counselor, has been asked to come to the field for several weeks following a traumatic situation. One of the field members was

raped and has left the field, but a number of her colleagues on the field are struggling with what happened and have asked to speak to a counselor. When Ms. Lui arrives, she sets up a schedule that allows individuals to sign up to see her. Several of the women she sees reveal that they were sexually abused as children, and this rape incident has stirred up troubling memories and feelings for them. Ms. Lui begins a process of intensive therapy with these women, assuming that they will continue this work with a local therapist after she leaves. Several weeks after she leaves, the administration is distressed to discover that several women in the branch can no longer perform their job duties because their functional level has so declined. Additionally, increased tension and stress have been present in their families.

Ms. Lui made several assumptions that may not be true. One assumption is that a local therapist would be available. Often, even if one is available, he or she may not speak the client's first language. Another assumption is that this kind of therapy work can be done on the field. I would propose that intensive therapy is not appropriate for the field, given the stresses and demands of field living, which require a great deal of energy. I believe that the most helpful form of therapy on the mission field is a brief, solution-oriented mode, which is educational, goal-oriented, and emphasizes strengths. Intensive work can be done in a less stressful, less demanding environment that may be available on a furlough or study leave.

Case Study 3

Nigel Smith, a qualified social worker, is asked to present at a field conference and decides to offer a workshop on grief and adjusting to loss. He makes himself available for several days after the workshop for any that want to come see him for a private counseling session. Mr. Smith emphasizes that these counseling sessions are completely confidential.

Tom and Betty have been on the field for 20 years. They have never been to see a counselor before, but both have been feeling fairly depressed and low energy, and they liked this counselor's presentation style in the workshop. As they talk with Mr. Smith, they help him understand that their new administrator has been abusive and critical. It seems that the administration has unreasonable expectations of them and does not at all understand their situation. In fact, the administration has asked them to go home to get some things taken care of, but they are convinced that this would only make things worse. They ask Mr. Smith to explain to the administration that they should stay on the field.

Although it seems obvious that Mr. Smith has only one side of the story and does not understand the system context of this situation, nevertheless he may be pulled to respond as an advocate for this couple. In fact, many counselors have fallen into this particular pitfall of advocating for the "client" missionary and becoming an adversary to the administrator. Our role, in contrast, should be to strengthen the entire system whenever possible. In this particular example, the counselor has not spoken with the administration so he does not know the circumstances of the couple being asked to leave the field. Because he has stressed absolute confidentiality, he has ruled out the possibility of a consultative, collaborative relationship with the administration. There may be possibilities he has not considered, such as moral lapse, job performance problems, interpersonal conflicts, or low financial support and debt.

Whether or not a missionary stays on the field is a complicated decision that involves a number of factors, including the person's mental health, support system, job performance, resources of the missions community, ethos of the organization, and the preferences of the family, home office, and supporting churches. As mental health professionals, we may have a contributing voice, but we do not have

the right to be an authoritative or final voice in the decision. The administrator or field leader is the one who will remain on the field to care for and work with each of the missionaries there. We have the opportunity to coach and mentor administrators in the value of member care, if we take a supportive rather than an adversarial role with them.

Case Study 4

Dr. Jesse Pinto is a psychiatrist who has been interested in working with missions for many years. He has done some work with a mission agency which is based in his local area, and he eagerly accepts an invitation to travel to Africa to provide debriefing for a team of missionaries who have just been evacuated out of their country of service to another country in Africa.

As a medical doctor, Dr. Pinto is aware of the medical precautions he must take—he gets his yellow fever shot and gets started on malarial prophylaxis. Dr. Pinto has been following the international news and has some basic understanding of what has been happening politically in the country these missionaries have just left. His understanding of African politics and geography is minimal, however. He does not speak any French but will be traveling to a French-speaking country.

A combination of sleep deprivation, severe climate difference, language barriers, and general adjustment to new stimuli leads Dr. Pinto to feel much more tired than he expects. He is unable to keep the pace he had hoped to maintain. Upon arrival, he is also surprised to learn that the missionary team is a multi-national team with people from North America, the UK, Switzerland, Brazil, and Argentina. His materials are all in his first language with a lot of idioms, and as he looks over his handouts, he realizes that many of his examples are specific to his culture.

When Dr. Pinto facilitates the group and individual debriefings, he notes that some people seem uncommunicative. Some give very poor eye contact, some seem sullen, some seem despondent, and some seem angry. He interprets these behaviors within the context of what they would mean if someone were from his country. He does not appreciate or understand the cross-cultural interpersonal dynamics that he observes.

Dr. Pinto is especially uncomfortable when some of the members begin talking about the demonic aspects of what they have experienced. When some begin to talk about unexplained illnesses, curses, and demonic possession, he wonders about their grasp on reality. He does not have a spiritual framework to understand the spiritual battles and demonic activities that are commonly experienced in Africa. The missionaries served by Dr. Pinto are grateful for his availability and technical skills. They are gracious in their response to him, but privately and among themselves, they know that he is very limited in his understanding of what they have experienced.

There are several ways Dr. Pinto could increase his cross-cultural sensitivity. Before leaving his home country, he could familiarize himself with the geography, politics, religion, and culture of the country where he is going, through various news and written resources. He could also do some reading that would help him become more familiar with his own cultural values and how these are perceived by people of other cultures. He could find out in advance what nationalities he will be serving and could attempt to access resources in their mother tongue or consult with other mental health professionals from their home countries who could assist him. Upon arrival, he could spend some time with several missionaries not directly involved in the crisis, to gain a better understanding of the unique stresses and issues faced in this area. Finally, he could broaden and deepen his understanding of spiritual warfare as it is manifested in different parts of the world.

Building Relationships With Mission Personnel

Clearly, receiving training as a mental health professional (or any other health care/member care-related field) does not automatically qualify or prepare one for working with missionaries overseas. In general, however, mental health professionals have made a commitment to certain ethical principles, such as working only within their area of competence and expertise, working responsibly such that they do not harm their clients, and maintaining supervision and accountability as professionally needed. There is also an increasing commitment to cross-cultural awareness, and more training is available in this area within many of the mental health professional organizations around the world. These commitments can aid us in overcoming roadblocks and building bridges, as outlined below.

Roadblocks

- Expert mentality.
- Use of technical jargon.
- Non-directive, vague style.
- Long term, intensive therapy model.
- Unstructured, loose use of time.
- Adversarial approach with leadership.
- Use of culturally biased materials.
- Slow response to crisis situations.
- Lack of accessibility.
- Assumptions about organizational needs.
- Inexperienced in cross-cultural counseling.
- Lack of follow-up.

Bridges

- Servant mentality.
- Humble approach.
- Integration of faith and practice.
- Biblical basis of teaching.
- Solution-focused, brief-therapy model.
- Brief, relevant workshops/devotionals.
- Knowledge of local resources.
- Knowledge of field history.
- Clear communication about confidentiality.
- Building trust and credibility through visits.
- Knowledge of demonic/spiritual warfare.
- Prayer with/for leaders.

Understanding the Mission Administrators' Perspective

Mental health professionals who take time to cultivate relationships with mission leadership will ultimately provide a better service to the missionaries on the field. Just as some psychotherapy models in the past ignored and alienated the family members of identified patients, seeing them as the source of the problem rather than pivotal to healing, so have some mental health professionals treated the mission community. Our challenge is to maintain good boundaries and competent, ethical professionalism, while also entering into relationships with missionaries and their leaders as genuine, vulnerable, co-laborers in Christ.

With these challenges in mind, we have the serious task before us of chipping away at some of the negative reputations and perceptions that have developed in the minds of many mission administrators towards mental health practitioners. Some of these perceptions are the result of actual experiences, and some based on bias or misperception. Regardless of the source, these are perceptions which can create barriers and which can perhaps be altered in the context of a genuine experience. Some examples of characteristics attributed to the "ineffective" mental health professional include evasiveness, permissiveness, promoting weakness, a touchy-feely approach, liberal theological views, and stirring up old issues which are better left alone.

Case Study 5: A Model Example

Heidi Schaeffer, a master's level counselor, is asked by a mission administrator to come to the field to do a workshop on transitions and to be available for counseling afterwards. She spends time via email and on the phone with the administrator, clarifying the expectations, needs of the community, values of the community, and recent crisis events within the community. She understands that even a crisis event that only involves one person can affect the entire community, because of the family nature of interdependence and support that is common in missionary groups. She probes further with this administrator to find out what his expectations are and who in the community might need additional attention. She clarifies before coming what will be kept confidential and what will be shared. Ms. Schaeffer talks openly with the administrator about the financial cost of her visit. They make an arrangement that covers the costs of her travel and provides for a modest honorarium. She works closely with the administrator to write a bulletin that will announce her coming and will explain her availability.

Ms. Schaeffer has been to this field before and is known by many of the missionaries there. She has developed the reputation of someone who is humble, unassuming, and available. She understands now the kinds of things that contribute to ongoing grief and stress in missionaries' lives. These are things like conflicts with others, saying good-bye to kids who will return to the home country for college, worrying about elderly parents, and severe sickness that is recurrent and life threatening in their friends and family on the field. She is aware of these things, and she prepares for her time on the field through prayer and the gathering of relevant resources.

When she meets with folks individually, she draws out their spiritual questions as well as their spiritual strengths and resources. Her work with them is brief and practical. She prays with them and commits to a follow-up plan with them. They know in advance what will and will not be communicated to their administrator. Though she is a guest in their world, they treat her as one of their own.

Conclusion

Mental health and other health care/member care specialists have a lot to contribute on the mission field. As in-house or outside service providers, we can offer workshops, consultation, assessment, and counseling. We can provide crisis intervention and debriefing. Our presence has the potential to be as Aaron and Hur were to Moses when they offered a very tangible way of providing strength, endurance, and courage in the battle (Ex. 17:12). But if we do not enter into their world with cultural sensitivity, we also have the potential to harm and do damage. Key to our effectiveness is working with mission leaders and building relationships with them. Together, we can better understand the member care needs of their people and provide the ongoing care that enhances a resilient and loving Christian community on the field. We have a lot to learn. And many from the missions community are willing and able to teach us and welcome us as guests in their world.

Reflection and Discussion

1. What are other values, assumptions, or behaviors that might be roadblocks between mental health professionals and missionaries?

2. How else can mental health professionals build bridges to missionaries and vice versa?

3. For each of the case studies, describe what you might do to improve the service being provided.

4. What could you do to become a better "guest in their world"? Or a better "host"?

5. In what ways might guests from Newer Sending Countries behave differently from guests from Older Sending Countries?

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32

Pastoral Encouragement: Seven Letters To Christian Workers

LAREAU LINDQUIST

Scripture admonishes us to "encourage one another day after day, as long as it is called 'today,' lest any of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin" (Heb. 3:13). Here are seven short messages taken from the "flowing font" of letters which the author—an international champion of encouragement—regularly sends to Christian workers around the world. These letters openly address some of the main areas of struggle in cross-cultural ministry. Leaders can use such letters to provide timely, valuable support to their mission personnel.

Letter 1: Growing Through Affliction

It was one year ago today that I had my severe automobile accident. The year has been filled with the full gamut of extremes: lows and highs, difficulties and discoveries. That has been true not only physically, but also emotionally and spiritually. Now in retrospect, I more fully see that it has been a valuable year—in fact, a very valuable year. I am able to agree with the Psalmist who wrote, "It was good for me to be afflicted" (Psalm 119:71). I am careful to observe that he saw the goodness of it all after the affliction was over and not in the middle of the affliction.

Often, friends ask me if I am different now than before. I think they are asking if I see things very differently now. Any significant changes? I answer quickly and certainly, "Yes, in many ways." Let me give an illustration or two.

First, I have especially discovered the *preciousness* of the Lord. He has been and continues to be so very precious. I have focused on His specific attributes and found them to be warm and true. Like Job, I have found that everything about God has become more real, more immediate, more intimate. Job, after going through multiple losses, witnessed a new self-revelation of God. He *then* said this to God: "Once my ears had heard of you, but now my eyes have seen you" (Job 42:5). There was no longer just a third-person awareness but now a first-hand experience. I can concur with Job's personal testimonial. I, too, have discovered Him more profoundly.

Second, I have learned more about *appreciation*. After being hospitalized for 11 weeks and significantly restricted for another five months, I took my first intercontinental

ministry trip to Austria and Bulgaria with Dick Anthony and Charley Warner. On the flight back to the States, I sat alone. All of a sudden, I sensed how really different things were. My life. My marriage. My ministry. My friends. I had a new sense of appreciation for everything. I no longer could take things for granted. After having almost lost everything, after having been to the brink, things were different. And things are still different.

While still thinking about all of this, I picked up a newspaper from England. I read an article about a woman who discovered that she had terminal cancer at age 25. She said that it was the darkest day of her life. Several years later, she was still living and doing very well. She wrote these words: "Eventually I discovered that my worst day had possibly become my best day *because* it became a turning point in my life. I began to celebrate each day as a special gift and each event as a special event." I also remember hearing Joni Eareckson Tada say this about her diving accident that left her permanently quadriplegic: "Outside of the day of my conversion to Christ, the greatest gift from the Lord was my accident at Chesapeake Bay."

I am not saying that all of us need an automobile wreck. Nor am I looking forward to the next wreck. Here is what I am saying: *God can be fully trusted with whatever comes into our lives.* He can bring blessings out of buffetings. He can turn tragedies into triumphs.

Earlier this afternoon, 14 of my Barnabas friends joined me at the tree, the site of the accident a year ago. A friend read from Romans chapter eight. Several of us shared what God had been teaching us through the year. We held hands as we encircled the tree. We sang to the Lord, "Great Is Thy Faithfulness." We prayed. And amazingly, there was a spirit of triumph in it all. It was a victory celebration. Only God can make that happen. Thank you, Lord.

Letter 2: Overcoming the "I Can't" Syndrome

Many of us are sometimes plagued with the *I can't* syndrome, so clearly illustrated in the life and ministry of Moses. When God called Moses to a very specific ministry assignment (Exodus 3-4), Moses repeatedly responded to God with this attitude, *I can't.* He finally submitted to the Lord, and he began to see the evidences of God's sufficiency in his life and ministry. There were times, however, when he again lapsed into his old pattern of self-dependency and its related despondency and impotency. Once, he even threatened to quit his ministry assignment (Exodus 33). He often needed to be reminded of the unlimited power of God that was promised to him when he said yes to God. We, too, need to understand the power principle that Moses and other biblical individuals discovered. Power for life, for ministry, for tough times—for everything that God puts in our paths.

Jesus told His disciples, "Without Me, you can do nothing" (John 15:5). We need to have these words deeply written on our minds and hearts. Perhaps we literally need to write them in places where we will see them frequently throughout the course of the day (e.g., at our desks, on our dashboards, above our sinks). Jesus is telling us that we are powerless without Him. *That's right, we can do nothing, nothing, nothing without Him.*

Paul, in Colossians 1:29, states it emphatically. He writes, "I labor, struggling with all His energy, which so powerfully works in me." Paul is wanting us to grasp an important truth, so he puts a lot of power words together in a single text. Let's be sure that we know what he is saying. I am emphasizing five power words here in the NIV translation: *labor, struggling, energy, powerfully, works*. Perhaps we ought to look at some other translations too:

- "I am contending according to His energy which is energizing itself in me with power" (Rotherham's *Emphasized New Testament*).
- "I am struggling like an athlete by His power that is working mightily in me" (William Beck's *New Testament in the Language of Today*).

As Paul loads up this verse with active, intense power words, he is *theologically* stating an important principle. Thankfully, he is also *practically* and *experientially* living out the principle in his life. In every letter, Paul speaks of God's power in us. He truly believed that God's power was available for him and us *to do* what He wants us to do, *to be* what He wants us to be, and *to become* what He wants us to become. The life stories of other biblical men and women dramatically illustrate the same truth. Too many of us have never discovered this principle, or perhaps we have simply neglected to make it a part of our lives and ministries. We needlessly live with a *power deficiency*. God's power is available to us. Yes, His power energizing you and me. Listen again: "I am struggling with all His energy, which so powerfully works in me." Paul never confused God's power with his own power. He knew that he was not the superman, but God was the Superman.

When J. B. Phillips did his first translation of the New Testament letters, he became overwhelmed with the way in which the early believers really allowed God to live in them and through them. He stated this observation in the preface to his translation: "Perhaps if we believed what they believed, we would achieve what they achieved."

Annie Johnson Flint wrote these words, which are familiar to many of us:

"His love has no limit.
His grace has no measure.
His power has no boundary known unto man.
For out of His infinite riches in Jesus,
He giveth and giveth and giveth again."

There is strength available for this day—and for the rest of the journey.

Letter 3: Perspectives on Pain

Two days ago, I spent a couple of hours with Pastor Samuel Lamb at his church in Guangzhou, China. It has been and continues to be the largest house-church in China. When I was there several years ago, I arrived late for a communion service. Hundreds of people were crowded into the second and third floors of the house. The narrow stairway was packed with people. Many others elsewhere listened by closed-circuit television or loudspeakers, some spilling out into the streets. Typically, 500 people attend these services, with a total of over 2,000 weekly. What a joy to meet these Christians, to hear them sing triumphantly to the Lord, and to share the Lord's table together.

Again this time, our team enjoyed personal time with Pastor Lamb. I asked him to share his personal story with us. What a story! Twice he has been imprisoned, once for 16 months and once for 20 years. Amazingly, he said that after the first imprisonment, there were more people in church. After the second imprisonment, there were even more people in church. They continued to see more growth. He stated and restated this observation several times: "More persecution was followed by more growth." He writes of this in his recently updated testimony: "Suffering is nothing to us. As long as we have the right attitude toward suffering (1 Peter 4), God will strengthen us. Likewise, it is not difficult to be faithful, but the difficulty is to 'be faithful, even to the point of death' (Rev. 2:10). Please continue your intercessory prayers for us. Thank you."

These words keep coming back to me: more persecution, more growth; more persecution, more growth. In Romans 8:35, Paul mentions a variety of struggles that may come to us. There can be trouble, hardship, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger, or sword, but Paul states that in all these things, we can still be more than conquerors through Christ (8:37). In 8:32, he refers to these difficulties as *grace-gifts*.

Recently, I read the book *A Grace Disguised*, by Gerald Sittser, in which the author tells of an automobile accident that he lived through. His wife, mother, and daughter were killed in the accident. Understandably, he writes of the tragic pain and loss that he suffered—incredible losses. Yet he eventually came to see that God brought some good things out of the initial horror of the event. At the time of the accident and in the early months and years following the event, he didn't see it as a *grace-gift* at all. In time , however, he recognized it as a *grace disguised*, as he entitled the book.

There seems to be a common thread in all these accounts. Samuel Lamb, the Apostle Paul, and Gerald Sittser agree that pain is real. It hurts a lot. They also agree that there is a positive side to pain and hurt. There is a potential blessing buried in the difficulty that could soon be seen as a gift from God.

The greatest illustration of this truth is focused on the weekend of Good Friday and Easter morning. The cross of Christ looked so tragic until Easter morning. Then the victory was apparent. Jesus, "for the joy set before Him," was able to endure the cross (Heb. 12:2). Beyond the cross, Jesus saw the joy of resurrection.

There is something beautiful beyond your present discomfort. The God of hope guarantees this to be true. As Otis Skillings writes, "Keep on keeping on."

Letter 4: We Have Christ

Some months ago, my brother, Lynn, and I spoke at the world headquarters for HCJB in Colorado Springs, Colorado. We spent most of one day together, which included a chapel service and several seminars. Before I spoke in chapel, I spent some quiet, personal moments alone in the office of their president, Ron Cline. I was impressed with a motto hanging on the wall, containing these five words: "For this I have Christ."

Several days ago, I talked with a Christian friend on the telephone. She shared a very distressing personal story with me. Their family is almost picture-perfect. They were a sharp couple in their mid-40s with four children, financially secure, and spiritually alive and alert. Then without any warning, speedily and unexpectedly, she was diagnosed with a potentially severe, chronic, disabling disease. Crash, bang, stop! Speaking of "a bend in the road," this was it. The Apostle Paul speaks of *troubles* and *hardships* in Romans 8:35. *Troubles* are often painful. *Hardships* are worse—more intense, more severe, perhaps more enduring. Sometimes they are very, very hard. Such was my friend's new plight.

As my friend told me of this difficulty, Ron Cline's motto came to mind, and I shared it with her. Immediately she said, "That's very good. Wait a minute as I write it down. For this I have Christ." Some time later, I talked with her husband, and he told me that she put this motto on their refrigerator door as a constant reminder of the sufficiency of Christ in their situation.

The Apostle Paul, in the context of personal affliction, wrote these words: "I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain" (Phil. 1:20-21). J. B. Phillips translates a part of verse 21 like this: "For me, living means simply Christ." Paul's relationship with Christ was real. It was vital. It was personal. In his prison experience and in all other difficulties, he eventually learned to lean on Christ. He found that knowing Christ and trusting Him made every situation a potentially triumphant experience. He never denied the reality of trouble. He did not sweep it under the rug, pretending it wasn't there. Nor did he downplay the painfulness of pain. But he was able to see it in the larger context of the sufficiency of Jesus. Over every personal crisis, he too had this

motto: "For this I have Christ." He believed it. He practiced it. It made a big difference.

As you face today and tomorrow, perhaps a trouble will visit you. It may briefly touch you. It may even linger a while. It may stay around a long time. At such a time, Jesus says to you, "Here I am." Respond with certainty, "Yes, even now, for this I have Christ."

Letter 5: Dealing With Death

Hebrews 9:27 says, "It is appointed unto man once to die and after this the judgment." Death is a certainty. It is a reality that each of us must face and accept. Although we may rarely think about it, death will eventually come to each of us. Usually we see it distantly, as in the death of a stranger. Or it may be closer, as in the death of a friend, a loved one, or even a family member. In recent days, a number of incidents have raised the awareness of death to me.

- My wife, Evie, and I spoke at the USA headquarters of MAF in California. The remains of Nate Saint's plane were recently uncovered from the sandy beaches in Ecuador, where Nate and four colleagues were murdered in 1956 by Auca Indians. Now this plane is on display, sitting in sand, at its new home at MAF. The scene of that plane vividly reminded me of that dreadful day, so powerfully told in Elisabeth Elliot's book, *Through Gates of Splendor.*

- Before we spoke in chapel that morning, Leon, a staff member, shared a prayer request with the congregation. He said, "By now, all of you have heard about the killing of two students by a fellow student just two days ago in a high school here in nearby Santee, California. One of those two boys, Bryan Zuckor, is my nephew by marriage. Please pray for the family."

- Later that week, we attended a conference where four Columbine students told their story of carnage, which they observed two years ago at a high school in Colorado in the USA. They shared the details that they observed and experienced. They also told of the varied and powerful impact in their lives: drawing them closer to the Lord; having a greater appreciation for their families; developing an awareness of the brevity of life; possessing a greater alertness for ministry to hurting and lonely people; and knowing how quickly difficulties can suddenly enter our lives. One said, "I've heard people say, 'Into each life, some rain must fall.' But for us, that day brought a cloudburst of epoch proportion." He had been shot and wounded in the library where many students were killed. Another told of walking with her teacher down the hall, when one of the shooters approached them and fired. The teacher was killed. Later, while she was being escorted from the building, she stepped over the body of her dead friend, Rachel Scott. As we listened to these students tell their stories, we were again reminded that each of us encounters troubles in a variety of sizes, shapes, and severities. Some have large dosages of trouble. These four had a colossal difficulty placed into their young lives. Yet each one revealed the greatness of God in giving Himself to them in love, grace, and tenderness through the enormity of the event. Though the pain was real and severe, so were the reality and compassion of the Lord.

The Apostle Paul writes, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written, 'For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.' No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us" (Rom. 8:35-37). The quotation in the middle of that paragraph is taken from Psalm 44:22. In spite of the *death* mentioned there, the word *victory* appears four times in the same psalm. Even as Paul writes of *death,* he speaks of being *more than conquerors.* The Old and the New Testaments are speaking of death and victory in the same phrase—in the

same context. Again, Paul states that "death has been swallowed up in victory" (1 Cor. 15:54).

Even in the crescendo of severities in our lives, we Christians can draw upon the resources we have in Christ. Amazingly, we can emerge as conquerors and victors, not because of who we are but because of who He is. An unknown author has said, "God chooses *what* we go through. We choose *how* we go through it."

Letter 6: There Is No One Like Jesus

Over 600 of us Christian leaders are here together in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. We are delegates to the quadrennial conference of the World Evangelical Fellowship. Registrants are here from almost 100 nations around the world. Additionally, we represent over 100 Christian organizations. Understandably, there have been many moments that will indelibly stay in our hearts. One such time was this morning when 30-35 black nationals from various countries in Africa spontaneously were called to the platform to sing. They sang in a language unknown to me. Their singing, however, was made understandable by their choreography. Enthusiastically they sang these words: "There's no one like Jesus. I looked to the right, and I looked to the left, and I looked behind me, too. I still found there is no one like Jesus."

This was a part of Peter's sermon in Acts 4:12, when he said, "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." Other Scriptures tell us that there are many other priceless possessions that can only be found in Jesus. These come to mind, all explicitly stated as gifts from Him alone: peace, joy, fellowship, life (abundant, spiritual, and eternal), forgiveness, and heaven, to mention but a few. No matter where we look for these, we will end up agreeing with Peter that they will be found *in no one else.* You and I have found this to be true. Let's be diligent in preaching and sharing this good news with others. We are surrounded by people on dead-end streets looking for realities that will never be found outside of Jesus. Let's tell them. Maybe you, like me, need to be freely reminded to share the good news. A medical doctor/minister, serving in Africa, once said to me, "Thanks, Lareau, for helping me to get back to the basics. There is something that is even more important than their physical health. It is their spiritual well-being." So quickly we can forget the best news of all—it is Jesus.

In the Philippines, I met two young pastors who told me of their father's conversion. One of them, as a child, was very ill. Their father, a tribal chief, took him to the witch doctor. He could not help them. Then they took him to a missionary, whose prayer brought healing to the child. That day, the father decided to follow Jesus. He became an evangelist and was greatly used of God. His two sons are now preaching Christ.

As our black colleagues sang to us this morning, I immediately thought of the numerous testimonials of people I have met all over the world whose lives have been transformed by Jesus. All of them can join us in singing, "There is no one like Jesus."

Let's often rehearse for the heavenly choir, where we will surround the throne of Jesus and join others to sing of His unparalleled glory, "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because You were slain, and with Your blood You purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.... Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise.... Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.... Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!" (Rev. 5:9, 12; 7:10, 12).

Today's events have brought me closer to that eternal day. Indeed, we are a part

of a "forever family," widely dispersed around the globe. Let's believe it and share it and sing it: there is no one like Jesus.

Letter 7: The Lord Is in Control

As Evie, my wife, and I were concluding our seminar at the WEF conference in Malaysia recently, a dear Christian brother from India, John Richard, stood to his feet and asked if he could say a word or two. He generously affirmed us and the ministries of Barnabas International around the world. He then prayed for Evie and me and for the wider ministries of Barnabas International. This phrase, in his prayer, especially caught my attention. He prayed, "Lord, we read in your Word that the steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord" (as taught in Psalm 37:23, KJV). Then he continued, "and we know that the stops along the way are also ordered by you."

Later that day and often since that day, I have pondered those truths, that the *steps* and the *stops* are ordered by the Lord. God is fully involved in our lives. His attributes are involved in our journeys every day, meaning that His wisdom, His love, His sovereignty, His grace, and His presence are at work on our behalf at all times. Let's make it personal. He is not at all detached, removed, or uninvolved in my *steps* nor in my *stops.* He is fully engaged in every detail of our lives.

The *stops* refer to our tough times, such as the delays, the detours, the afflictions, and the disappointments. Many Christians find it difficult to accept God's involvement in our dark hours. They just cannot imagine or believe that God would bring such things upon us. The authors of Scripture, however, carefully affirm this truth.

- Joseph, after the incredible abuses he suffered from his brothers, said to them, "You intended to harm me, but God meant it for good" (Gen. 50:20).
- The Psalmist wrote, "It was good for me to be afflicted.... O Lord, in faithfulness you have afflicted me" (Psalm 119:71, 75).
- Job, in his devastating afflictions, immediately said, "The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away" (Job 1:21). Throughout the book of Job, in his conversations with God, he often reaffirmed his belief that God was the Source and the Author of his tough times. In the final chapter of his book (Job 42:11), he wrote of the blessings that God gave him after all the trouble the Lord had brought upon him.

God not only *allows* tough times, He *orchestrates* them as well. We sing these words, "He's got the whole world in His hands; He's got you and me, brother, in His hands; He's got you and me, sister, in His hands." He has all creation in His hands. Listen to Isaiah's confidence in Isaiah 40:10-11: "See, the sovereign Lord comes with power, and His arm rules for Him.... He gathers the lambs in His arms and carries them close to His heart." Indeed, He is sovereign. He is powerful. And He carries us close to His heart.

Indeed, our steps and our stops are ordered by the Lord. Just weeks ago, the Christian world was shocked and saddened to read of the ABWE tragedy in Peru. The mission plane was bringing Jim and Roni Bowers to their assignment, when the plane was mistaken to be an illegal drug plane. Repeatedly, gunfire hit their plane, crippling the craft and bringing it down into the river. The pilot was severely injured. Jim's wife and infant daughter were killed. Jim, reflecting on the horrible incident, said, "It is the love of God that constrains us to go to the ends of the earth. In the will of God and providence of God, there is no such thing as an 'accident.' He plans everything that comes into our lives."

God is the Master Architect. He is in the process of creating a masterpiece out of you and me. He can be trusted to do what is best for you and me. It is not always the easiest for us to accept nor the choice we would have made. But He will do whatever He wills to do. And it will be good.

O Lord, thank you for ordering my steps and my stops. Thank you for grace to trust you in every moment. Amen.

Reflection and Discussion

1. Which of these letters are the most relevant for you right now? In what ways?
2. If you were to write an "encouragement" letter to a colleague or team, what theme would you address, and which Scriptures would you use?
3. How could similar letters (including email messages and email video clips) be incorporated into the member care program of your organization?
4. Identify some other key topics for Christian workers that could be addressed via these types of letters.
5. The seven letters in this chapter emphasize the love and closeness of Christ, and they stimulate us to persevere and not give up. Try summarizing some of these letters in one sentence, and follow each by a key verse from Scripture. Share these with some colleagues.

Dr. Lareau Lindquist *and his wife, Evie, started Barnabas International in 1986, a ministry committed to spiritual/pastoral ministry. After 21 years in pastoral ministry and another three years as the President of the Institute of Holy Land Studies (now Jerusalem University), they sensed a call from God to begin a ministry which would exist to bless and build people involved in ministry. Lareau served as Executive Director of this ministry—Barnabas International— for 15 years, traveling to over 100 countries. Currently Lareau and Evie are spending time as Senior Associates via studying, writing, teaching, counseling, and ministering to Christian leaders worldwide. Lareau continues to write monthly letters for Christian workers called* ***Encouragement****. Email: Barnabas@Barnabas.org.*

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Reviewing Personal Spirituality: Reflections on Work With Overseas Personnel

ANNIE HARGRAVE

Working in overseas mission and aid is always personally challenging. People's faith, beliefs, and spirituality must be lived out in a different culture and sometimes in places of unaccustomed poverty, conflict, and difficulty. This chapter takes a look at a way of exploring what has happened for people and reflecting on what it means for them spiritually.

Everyone who works with people who are returning from an overseas assignment does so in a specific context. This context will have a bearing on how we approach the task and makes a difference in how people view us.

If you are on the staff of a mission agency and are seeing your personnel upon their return from a period of work in another country, you are likely to have some advantages. You may already know the people concerned, and as long as you have not had difficulties with each other in the past, you will probably feel reasonably comfortable with each other. You will be familiar with the particular stance of your organization, so you can use language which you believe will be welcomed and understood. For example, if you belong to an Evangelical group, you will probably use the term "pastor" or "minister." If you are part of a Roman Catholic mission, you will use the word "priest." It is possible that you will be part of the management structure. In this position, you may be able to take up a particular financial request within the organization, or you may be able to advise personnel that what they are seeking is unlikely to be well received.

If your personnel have the opportunity to review their mission with someone who is independent, there are gains for them in this arrangement as well. People usually feel a greater freedom to talk about things such as problems with field managers or doubts in their faith life, if they are able to do so in a confidential setting outside their organization. Sometimes people are less inhibited in expressing themselves, whether they feel anger, bitterness, fear, or some other emotion. This openness does not mean, however, that you can make assumptions about the language preferred for discussion, the meaning of terms, shared be-

liefs, or goals. Differences in these areas may slow down the review process, but they may also encourage deeper questioning. If you have to work at making yourself clear, you tend to think things through more thoroughly. Personnel are often surprised to make discoveries about what they think, believe, and do, when they have the chance to review their experiences carefully with someone outside their immediate context.

I work with an independent health care practice that is dedicated to personnel whose work takes them overseas in the charitable sector. My clients come from Christian mission agencies, as well as from emergency and relief organizations and development programs. Personnel may be working as church planters or as lorry drivers, as Bible translators or as journalists, as bishops or as prison monitors. They may serve in Uganda or New York, in Sarajevo or Sudan. They may live in a traditional mission compound or an apartment block, in a community house or a tent.

Spirituality and issues of faith are covered within an overall personal, confidential review of the time spent overseas. We use the word "review" rather than "debrief." This is because in the UK there is often a narrow definition of the word "debrief" as a technique associated with early interventions after trauma. Controversy over the meaning has made the term unhelpful for us, as we seek to work responsibly and carefully with people.

In our reviews with overseas workers, we have the advantages of being independent and of being in a position to guarantee confidentiality, unless an agreement is reached with the client to pursue a relevant issue, possibly with the sending agency or in whatever other context seems appropriate. Confidentiality is also waived in the case of a person who is deemed to be unsafe or unfit to work and who is unwilling to agree to disclose this to his/her organization. In our experience, it is almost always possible to work with someone to achieve a satisfactory agreement. In this extreme case, however, the agency concerned would be notified, although personal details would not be disclosed. The person involved would be permitted to see any written communication and would always be fully informed. In practice, this situation happens so rarely that it is discounted for the purposes of this article.

In our review sessions, we especially value the discipline of not making assumptions about people. This is particularly needful in the areas of spirituality, religious belief, and religious experience. People often feel that they are changed, that they have encountered some new and unexpected spiritual experience, that they have met God in a different way, or that they have been stretched and challenged to their limit as a result of living and working overseas. Sometimes these realities are disturbing; at other times, they are wonderful.

Principles for Reviewing Spirituality

The context I have described is the one out of which the following thoughts about reviewing people's personal spirituality arise. I suggest five basic principles as guidelines for thinking about your practice. You may be able to use them to evaluate what you do. They are applied to the brief case studies which follow. They can also enhance the clarity and policy of your organization and your own personal and professional development.

1. Purpose

It is helpful to think through, honestly and clearly, what your purpose is in reviewing personal spirituality. For example, do you see the review as an opportunity to reflect and learn from experience? Is it an organizational check to ensure that personnel remain within the bounds of the beliefs and values required? Is it a means of evaluating performance or of

getting information and feedback about the workplace and task? Are you seeking material for publication and promotion? One purpose that is *not* recommended is to use the review for disciplinary measures. If a serious breach of trust should come to light during the review, the possibilities of discussing the matter in an appropriate forum can be addressed.

2. Setting

The setting in which the review takes place should be safe, and the limits and ground rules should be made clear.

The place. There should be adequate accommodation and privacy. The location should be safe.

The boundaries. The duration of the review should be explicit—whether for a set period of time or open ended. It should be clear where the responsibility for payment lies, if fees are being charged. There should be no interruptions; mobile phones should be switched off. The extent of confidentiality should be clearly understood. Is it complete? Will there be a report? Who has access to the information? Might the review appear in promotional material? Making the boundaries explicit facilitates emotional and spiritual security.

The possibilities. It is helpful, both to you and to the people returning from overseas, to have an idea of any situations which might come out of the review. For example, sometimes a follow-up appointment is possible. At other times, it is possible to offer to explore funding for a conference or for a special family visit.

Whatever you decide about your setting—whether the review will be held in a room or outside; whether you organize drinks or not; how you define the boundaries and possibilities—will be according to your ethos and needs. However, transparency and clarity about the arrangements will help you all to get the most out of the review process.

3. Your Skills and Commitment

You need to be committed to your task and as well-prepared as possible. It is helpful to be aware of both your capacities and your limitations. Knowing your capabilities allows you to be confident that what you offer is worthwhile. What you are not able to manage can be acknowledged, and further help can be sought, if appropriate.

You are there to concentrate on the workers returning from overseas. It is not appropriate to talk about your own experiences or needs—these should be addressed somewhere else.

Be as informed as possible about the overseas location where people have been serving. They will appreciate it if you have a general knowledge of the region, if you know what language is spoken there, if you are aware of any recent conflict or coup, and if you are able to recognize how different the thinking, customs, beliefs, and behavior of the local people may be from your own.

Always be willing to listen to what is actually being said, rather than what you hope or expect to hear. If the information is not clear, check it out. Reflect back what you hear, so that what is shared can be well considered and accurately understood.

Look for things that don't jibe. For example, if someone tells you about a death but continues to smile without leaving any space for sadness and loss, or if you are hearing about great achievements told in a flat tone of voice with no enthusiasm, you know something is not quite right. An attempt is being made, often without the person's realizing it, to cover over something difficult. You may not be able to understand what is occurring, but you can certainly observe that it seems to be happening.

Use your skills well, be committed to the task, and be willing to seek appropriate support and consultation for yourself. Such support will be a good safeguard in

your practice and will improve your capacity to do a really good review.

4. Open Mindedness

Set aside your preconceptions, assumptions, and expectations, and cultivate an open mind. The more you can do this, the more you will learn about the people with whom you are working. You will sometimes hear things which will shock or sadden you or otherwise impact you. You must allow yourself to feel the impact without being overwhelmed. You will also be endlessly surprised and delighted by the variety and depth of experiences people will relate to you. Open mindedness is a quality which will serve you well, as you seek to accompany individuals in working through issues and as you look for a creative and appropriate way forward.

5. Not Knowing the Answers

The capacity to tolerate what is unknown, to allow a mystery, to accompany someone in distress—to *not* know the answers—has a liberating effect and increases trust. The experience is liberating, because the person who feels something to be unbearable or shameful or stupid finds that it is, in fact, tolerated and taken seriously. This opens up the event so it can be contemplated in unanticipated ways. Not knowing the answers can increase trust, because you are respecting the experience and the extent of the difficulty or struggle. You are willing to participate in the discomfort of people's pain or the awe of their discovery, without imposing an easy answer or a conventional explanation. This tends to make people feel valued, listened to, properly regarded, and respected.

Summary

When you have considered the context of your work and have thought through the opportunities and limits it offers, you can go on to think about how you actually want to conduct your reviews with people. The five principles outlined above will help you to choose appropriately how you want to proceed. They can also provide guidance for monitoring your work and for identifying areas in which you want to improve your skills and practice.

I invite you now to enter into the case studies which follow and to question and evaluate what emerges. Of course, people's experiences do not fall neatly into easily manageable categories. Their dreams, relationships, work, prayers, health, family history—everything that they are—are all woven together. We do well to bear this in mind, reminding ourselves that it is impossible to cover everything. The task of the review of personal spirituality is to discover with people what is important for them now, what they can usefully reflect on and learn from, and how they might move forward positively with the outcomes.

Case Studies

The four case studies that follow all feature Christian mission personnel, although the same approach is used with people who are working with agencies that do not claim any Christian faith or principles. The case studies are all essentially true. Identifying details and contexts have been changed to protect confidentiality.

Case 1: Community Pain

Marie was a Roman Catholic nun who was accustomed to moving, having a teaching and training role which took her from place to place. The UK was not her country of origin, and English was not her native language. She said that she was quite happy to be in London and was comfortable to be speaking English. She talked about a successful time of work and ministry in her African placement. She had collaborated well with the national priests and had felt accepted by and called to the people with whom she was working.

In spite of her apparent successes, Marie's tone of voice and expression of

emotion were flat. There appeared to be little real sense of satisfaction in the achievements she was detailing. I asked if she had been able to sustain her religious observance, and she said she had maintained her disciplines… but.… The hesitations signaled that something she had found difficult was about to emerge into the discussion.

Marie had been living in a house with two other expatriate sisters. She said she was used to living with other nationalities. She did not think this should have been a problem. She took her time to tell me that the other two sisters had got on together very well. She had felt excluded, and this made her irritable, then angry, and then hostile towards them. She said she had shut herself off, hardened her heart, and acted as though she didn't care.

I commented on how terribly painful the experience was. We sat in silence for a full three minutes. I wondered what was in her mind, but she shook her head. I wondered about her sense of call.

This was the trigger for her to be able to express her central fear. She said that her whole experience of God's presence in her life was rooted in community. She had been through ups and downs before, but this time she had not been able to find a sense of belonging in the community (the mini-community of three) in which she had been placed. The exclusion she felt from the closeness between the other two sisters amounted to God's excluding her from Himself. It meant that, despite the concrete achievements she had made, her mission had been a massive failure.

Reflection

Marie was very troubled and needed to work through her pain in the context of spiritual direction within her community. She was at risk of becoming depressed. I was in a position to offer her follow-up appointments to help her make sense of her distress. However, this relief was not possible while the feeling of being excluded from God was predominating and remained unexpressed. In my view, this was the main achievement of the spiritual review. It opened up the way for Marie to address the unhappiness of her spiritual experience, and it indicated to others around her what it was that was troubling her.

In terms of the five principles described above, all of them were important in order to help Marie. The clarity of purpose, which we always explain, laid a foundation for Marie to be open enough to allow her distress to surface. The setting ensured there would be time. We would not be rushed or interrupted, so the halting silences of her emotional and spiritual struggle to express herself could be accommodated.

The third principle suggests that a genuine commitment to the task and the person you are with is important. You don't need to *tell* people that you are rushed, that you are preoccupied with something else that is "more important," or that you hope there will not be any problems to deal with. Your clients will pick such attitudes up very quickly. In response, they will almost certainly shut down on their most sensitive vulnerabilities, and you will miss your opportunity to help them with these.

In Marie's case, it was important to be informed and open regarding the priorities and language with which she would be familiar. It was even more important to be able to observe that the achievements she described did not match her flat tone of voice and her withdrawn demeanor.

Maintaining an open mind and being willing not to jump to conclusions were crucial. The reality was that I genuinely did not know how Marie would express her distress. I had to be able to tolerate that in myself, in order to enable Marie to tolerate it. In terms of the skills involved, I would point to the three-minute silence. Three minutes is such a short time in ordinary living, but it feels like a very long time indeed in the quiet, undistracted setting under discussion here!

Case 2: Surprise From Community

Sandra was a married mission partner with small children, who had been living overseas for the first time in a very densely populated urban area. She was now back in the UK for her first period of leave after three years abroad.

During our session together, I asked Sandra if she felt she had been able to nourish herself spiritually. She sighed. She said she had always enjoyed a pattern of Bible study and prayer, both privately and with others. She had tried so hard to continue this pattern in her overseas setting, but it had felt like a heavy and often impossible chore. I commented that she sounded disappointed with herself. She said she hadn't been able to find how to maintain her devotional life. Everything was so tiring. It was so hot, with so much to do. Her small children woke her early, and by evening she was too worn out. She never seemed to get enough time. It was frustrating, and she worried about how much she was really accomplishing.

As we talked, there were pauses and silences. Sandra struggled to express herself. It was halting and jerky. I then asked her how she had managed to make it so far spiritually, with so little time and so much disruption. She said she had to let go of her expectations for her devotional life. She still thought of it as valuable, but somehow she had to find other ways.

What followed next were several comments about her missing the evenings when she would sit outside with other women who were also living in her apartment complex. She smiled and reminisced about the cooler times, when people sat together, talked, played with their children, and brought cold drinks outside. She laughed and said that they talked about everything from seasonal recipes to measles, from religious constraints to opportunities in education. Some of the other women were from the church, and sometimes they talked about their faith.

Sandra then interrupted her own flow of speech. She began to notice the connection between her time with the neighbors and her time with the Lord. God had met with her in the friendships, both with other Christians and with people of other faiths. The discussion that followed explored the idea that God could meet her in unexpected ways and that these events could enrich her, her family, and her Bible study and prayer.

Reflection

Sandra was able to make good use of the atmosphere of openness, the silences, and the questioning during the review. She found a way to make sense of her experience, and she put it into a framework of meaning which connected into the narrative of her faith. The review enabled her to consider her usual and preferred devotional pattern, the frustration and disappointment she felt, and this new kind of experience of community. The experiences that she had with others could now fit better into her sense of purpose, calling, and devotional life.

Case 3: The Same Yesterday, Today, and Forever

Bernard and Joan were a mixed race, inter-cultural couple. He was a national of the country where they lived and worked, and she was an expatriate mission partner. After their marriage, they made their home overseas, but they continued to be linked with the mission agency for which Joan had originally worked. The couple had two young children.

Because of war, they had decided to relocate to Joan's passport country in order to safeguard the welfare of their children. Several members of Bernard's family, including a brother, had been murdered. Shortly after evacuating, they were informed that their house had been burned down. They were currently living with members of Joan's family.

As we met, they said they were comfortable. They had enough space and privacy but did not feel isolated, having good relations with Joan's relatives. Bernard and Joan detailed their upheavals and losses with great sadness and confusion. They said they were not angry but accepted that life was like this. Westerners, they said very emphatically, did not understand how things were. They considered Westerners to be too sentimental about human life—"people don't live forever."

I wondered about their faith in God in the midst of all the uncertainty. Both were strong in their declaration that God had "brought them through." Joan said that God was all you could rely on. Nothing else really mattered. Bernard, in a gentler tone of voice, said that he knew his brother was with God. That was what he thought about—not the way in which he had died.

I commented that what they were saying made me think of the Bible verse that says that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Both were pleased with this association, and they conveyed a sense of relief. We were able to go on to discuss what they felt they needed in their faith life at this point. Towards the end of our time, I suggested that their needs to discuss their transition and experiences might change as time went by.

Reflection

Clearly, Bernard, Joan, and their children had been through an extremely painful time which had turned their lives upside down. Their purpose, security, setting, and future were all swept from under them. The losses, including loved ones and home, could not be handled. It would take a long time to go through the processes of mourning and rebuilding their lives. They had kept the overwhelming events at bay by concentrating on the one focus which they believed would endure and survive—God.

Bernard and Joan were able to use both me and the review in various ways. One outcome was their expression of anger. They were not able, currently, to express their anger about what had happened in their country. They were, however, able to be angry with me! Their views about Westerners, directed at me, allowed me to see that their anger was indeed coming out, although not yet in appropriate ways. Being the recipient of people's hostility without taking it personally and becoming defensive sounds easy enough, but it is not!

The second outcome was the discussion that ensued by my acceptance of their declaration of faith without question. I judged that it was more helpful to accompany them exactly where they were at the time without challenge. This enabled them to relax enough to be able to talk about having needs. I also felt obliged to suggest that their needs might change over time. My hope was that the comment would be remembered and would open them up to process their experiences further at a later date.

Case 4: Wide Open Spaces

Simon was a married man with small children. He was from a house-church background and was accustomed to taking leadership roles. In his overseas post, he exercised managerial and pastoral responsibilities in a church. He also keenly felt the burden of taking care of his family, having to adapt to life in a difficult neighborhood. They lived in a densely populated, big city.

Simon was troubled because he had been unable to find a way to live what he described as "a consistent Christian life." He longed for a desire to pray regularly and for inner strength. He had asked for help from elders both in the overseas location and from his sending church. He felt he had tried harder and harder, going "through the hoops," but he had only become more frustrated, more panicky, and more irritable.

We focused initially on the heavy responsibilities he carried, but the discussion seemed to make no impact. There

were thoughtful silences, and I tried to say something about the feelings aroused by the conversation. I wondered aloud about two or three things, to which he said no. Finally, I managed to hit the nail on the head. I commented that I sensed there was something about his feeling trapped.

At this, there was an abrupt change in Simon. "Oh yes! Absolutely trapped!" he responded. He recounted how he had been brought up on an island and how he used to go for long walks on his own. He was now animated, as he reminisced about the marvels of the sea, beaches, sky, praying, singing, and enjoying life. His senses, memory, and perspectives were rekindled. There seemed no end to the enthusiasm and delight in his voice.

He stopped himself and remarked sadly that none of these things were available to him in his overseas assignment. He could only sigh as he related how impossible it felt to get out of his constraining environment.

This led to thinking about how Simon might find the external space he had always enjoyed, which would enable him to have the spiritual and emotional space to take on the demands of his calling. In considering alternatives, he was able to be flexible. He was realistically aware that he could not recreate his earlier experiences, but he was open to the possibility of finding some new equivalents.

Reflection

Simon was a very gifted and competent young man. His work practices were innovative and exciting. However, he found himself trapped, both by the environment and also by a defined way of thinking about spiritual life. Once this realization emerged, he was astonished to hear himself. It unlocked hope for him. He was full of gratitude, saying he now could see what it was all about.

In the review, I had initially focused on the heavy load of responsibilities that Simon was trying to shoulder. We addressed the idea of appraising and rethinking his workload. However, it was clear that this idea, good enough in itself, was not touching his worry about his spiritual life. The discipline of the helper remaining open minded was essential. It was not easy to locate the core of Simon's need. It was important to be alert, to continue to explore, and to keep on listening. When Simon's energy level shifted upon striking emotional "gold," we could both hear it loud and clear!

I did not see Simon again. I do not know what he did, and I had to keep myself from become preoccupied with my hope that he was able to incorporate what emerged in the review. Knowing we cannot do everything or know all the answers, we trust that people will be able to apply what is useful to them.

Final Thoughts

The approach to reviewing personal spirituality, as outlined here, is rooted in our particular context. Yours will not be the same as mine. I hope, however, that you will be able to take up whatever is useful to you.

The task is not easy. You may wish to use a checklist or ask people a number of routine questions to begin the session. Whatever you do will be worthwhile and will be appreciated, as long as you maintain respect and commitment at all times. This includes the willingness to seek help beyond yourself. Occasionally, this means more specialized consultation with a professional. It may mean a referral to a counselor or a spiritual director, or it could entail facilitating attendance at a conference or a course.

It is important that you work with others from time to time to monitor your own practice. A working partner, supervisor, or consultant with whom you have a trustworthy, confidential arrangement should be available to you.

At times, you will need to find help for yourself, care properly for yourself, and review your own stresses, conflicts, and life issues. Taking care of yourself frees you to be fully available for your task, without

your personal issues getting mixed up in your work.

It is a constantly fascinating privilege to be engaged in the review of people's personal spirituality. I hope you will find the five principles outlined above to be helpful in thinking about your work with people returning from overseas and particularly as you review their spiritual experiences with them.

Reflection and Discussion

1. In what ways do you think this process of review of personal spirituality is similar to spiritual direction or pastoring? How is it different?

2. Are there other core principles that you use to guide your work with helping people? If so, what are they?

3. Review the author's comments on the advantages and disadvantages of using in-house or outside consultants. Which is more relevant for your organization and setting?

4. What is the role of prayer in doing spiritual reviews? For example, is it something to begin and/or end with? What expectations and inhibitions might you be setting up by starting with prayer? How might prayer help or interfere with the process?

5. What sort of things arising in a review of spirituality would alert you to the need for more specialized help? What resources and ideas do you have to offer, and how would you go about discussing these?

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Helping Missionaries Start Healthy And Stay Healthy

MICHAEL E. JONES
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In this chapter, we review ways in which physicians, acting as medical officers for mission agencies, can help ensure that candidates at selection are medically fit for their work. Physicians can also confidently reassure serving missionaries that they are fit to continue on the field. Experience and staying updated in tropical and travel medicine are essential. *

Physical Health Risks

The last 100 years have seen a radical improvement in the health risks associated with missionary service. A century ago, the health risks were high, and fatalities were common. Of the 133 missionaries sent out prior to 1915 by the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, 20% died (McCracken, 1973), and it was usual for missionaries to take their own coffins as they sailed away from the UK. West Africa became known as "the white man's grave," a description that ignored the fact that it was also the African's grave to the same or a greater extent. Missionaries and volunteers were exposed to the appalling health risks of a tropical climate, without the protection of vaccines or anti-malarial prophylaxis and treatment, and they paid a heavy price.

Tropical location health risks decreased after the advent of potent anti-malarial treatments and effective vaccines in the middle of the last century. The first vaccine to be used extensively was smallpox at the beginning of the 20th century, at which time 1,500 deaths occurred from this dreadful disease each year in the USA alone. Worldwide campaigns resulted in the eradication of smallpox in 1977. Typhoid vaccine was first used in British troops in the Boer war and more extensively during World War I. BCG for tuberculosis was first introduced in France in 1920, and since

* The reader is referred to two chapters in the recent *Textbook of Travel Medicine and Migrant Health*. This book includes a helpful chapter by one of the authors on "Psychological aspects of travel and the long-term expatriate" (Jones, 2000) and a chapter by Dr. Ted Lankester on "Health screening and psychological considerations in the returned traveler" (Lankester, 2000).

then 3 billion doses have been administered worldwide. Diphtheria vaccine was introduced into general use in 1938, whooping cough vaccine in 1948, polio vaccines in 1955, measles vaccine in 1968, meningococcal A and C vaccine in 1969, hepatitis B vaccine in 1981, and hepatitis A vaccines in 1992.

These advances had a marked impact on mortality risks. Between 1945 and 1970, Protestant missionaries from the USA had an overall death rate 40% lower than for a US control group, despite the fact that infectious disease risks were still about 50% higher, initially mostly due to poliomyelitis in non-vaccinated individuals and malaria (Frame, Lange, & Frankenfield, 1992). However, non-infectious disease risks have also changed, and between 1958 and 1970, American missionaries were 50% more likely to die of accidental death in Africa than if they had been in the USA.

Gaps remain in the current range of vaccines, most notably for potentially lethal and common infections such as dengue fever. The risk of acquiring TB has increased significantly (Cobelens et al., 2000) and now approaches that of hepatitis A without vaccination. BCG protects against severe forms of TB, but it is by no means an ideal vaccine, and there is no reliable way of assessing how effective it has been in stimulating cell-mediated immunity, which is important in protection against acquiring TB. Skin tests are only a partial guide.

Hepatitis B remains an under-recognized risk. In the missionary cohort, the major transmission risk is via minor contact with carriers. This may involve only tiny quantities of body fluids, i.e., not sexual and not vertical from mother to child (Van Damme et al., 1995). The risk is greatest for pre-adolescent children (Davis, Weber, & Lemon, 1989). One study of American Protestant missionaries estimated an overall hepatitis B annual attack rate of 4.2%, with overall post-service evidence of infection in 26% (Lange & Frame, 1990). Unsafe injections for those receiving health care overseas are an additional hazard. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that 12 billion injections are given worldwide each year, with 95% administering drugs rather than vaccines. Many of these are given without adequate sterilization of injection equipment. WHO estimates that 60% of hepatitis B prevalence in India and more than 40% in Egypt may be transmitted in this way, resulting on a global basis in 1.3 million deaths annually (WHO, 1999). All missionaries serving in areas where hepatitis B is common, including Eastern Europe, should be vaccinated, whether or not they are involved in health care work.

The advent of HIV infection two decades ago has added an entirely new risk factor, particularly for health care workers, among whom we are likely to see an increasing number of HIV infections. A tragic example was Joy Bath, an Elim Pentecostal missionary working in Zimbabwe, who contracted HIV as the result of blood splashing onto a wound on her foot in a labor ward and who died four years later in 1995 (Stokes, 1995). It is a fact of missionary life that some workers expose themselves to HIV risk through extramarital relationships, including relationships with commercial sex workers who, in both Africa and Asia, have very high rates of HIV prevalence. I have seen more than a dozen missionaries who have placed themselves at risk, and in one case HIV infection resulted.

Malaria went into decline in many developing countries as the result of colonial era mosquito control measures, but altered financial priorities after independence, a retreat from the use of DDT, and climate change have all contributed to a worldwide resurgence. These factors have unfortunately coincided with the advent of multiple-drug resistance. In Africa, chloroquine and proguanil, which for many years were the mainstays of protection for long-stay expatriates, are decreasingly effective. The current alternatives are either horrendously expensive or have infrequent but potentially serious adverse

effects. It is quite possible that the future logical choice of anti-malarial medication in some areas of very high malaria transmission may cost a missionary agency £2,000 annually for a family. Malaria has returned to its former position as a potentially lethal threat to the life and health of missionaries and volunteers.

In the last quarter century, road traffic accidents (RTAs) have emerged as the leading cause of death, and frightening statistics of the deaths and injuries that occur in many developing countries were published 10 years ago (Smith & Barss, 1991). As one example, the fatality rate per 10,000 vehicles was 70 times greater in Nigeria in 1978 than in the USA. Dutch researchers have noted an increased mortality among development workers, double that of the general Dutch population, with RTAs being the leading cause of death (Schouten & Borgdorff, 1995). Murder and death during burglary now occur with disturbing and increasing frequency. A recent survey of deaths in humanitarian workers concluded that humans with weapons now pose a greater threat than motor vehicles and that both veterans and inexperienced workers are at risk (Sheik et al., 2000).

Psychological Health Risks

Even a cursory examination of the last two centuries of missionary enterprise reveals the uncomfortable fact that some eccentric individuals played a significant role in missionary endeavor. God honored their commitment and blessed their work, but a significant cost was borne by their colleagues and families, alluded to by Tucker and Andrews (1992). Those who did not make the headlines also had problems. About 90 years ago, Price (1913) analyzed over 1,000 missionaries working with the Church Missionary Society between 1890 and 1908. He found that 40% did not persevere with their assignments. In two-fifths of the cases, the problem was due to mental health issues. Much more recently, Peppiatt and Byass (1991) found an 11% risk of psychiatric disorder in a study of 212 Methodist personnel. Why is missionary service associated with detectable and sometimes significant psychological problems? It is due to a combination of the characteristics of both soil (the new environment) and seed (the character of the missionary). We now look at issues concerning the new environment.

The New Environment

Adaptation to a new culture is stressful. Culture shock, the term often still applied to the early stages of the process of cultural adaptation, was first coined by Oberg (1960), but it is only the first stage in a transitional process which may take several years to complete. Missionaries start their journey as monocultural beings and usually finish as adapted bicultural people. Oberg identified four stages. The fascination with the new country in the first few weeks gives way to hostility and aggression in the second stage, followed by a third stage of partial acceptance, during which a sense of humor re-emerges. In the final fourth stage, the immigrant operates in his/her new world without a feeling of anxiety, accepting the customs of the country as another way of living with enjoyment. Adler (1975) called the stages of cultural adaptation contact, dis-integration, re-integration, and autonomy. Hiebert (1985) in his book *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries* describes the stages as tourist, disenchantment, resolution, and adjustment.

For all who make cross-cultural transitions, the changes will be, to some extent at least, unpredictable. For most missionaries, the changes are voluntary, and there is therefore strong motivation to work through them. For some family members, however, the transition to a new culture may be involuntary. Family members with a clear sense of their own identity and a desire to make their own choices may experience considerable difficulty if they have not been party to the decision making process. This is especially true for adolescent children and spouses who are

unwilling migrants, attempting to follow obediently in the steps of their parent or marriage partner. Transitions that are both involuntary and unpredictable are inherently more stressful (Hopson & Adams, 1976).

Elements of bereavement also come into the picture (Bowlby, 1984; Huntingdon, 1984; Parkes, 1972). Leaving one's home country on a longer-term basis necessarily involves varying degrees of loss, depending on personal circumstances and motivation. Where the loss is deep, a bereavement reaction will follow, which will affect functioning in the new environment.

Beyond the basic stresses of cultural adaptation, there are chronic cumulative stresses, and sadly and all too often, there are serious traumas which cannot be avoided (De Haan, 1997; Foyle, Beer, & Watson, 1998). In one study of missionary personnel, 17% of those interviewed were suffering from stress reaction (Foyle, 1991). The extent of stress reaction may vary from mild fatigue and loss of enthusiasm for work to severe exhaustion, escalation of personal conflicts, and major depressive and anxiety symptoms with suicidal ideation (Richardson, 1992).

Those working in locations with high stressor exposure and few possibilities for escape soon become ineffective helpers for those they have come to serve. In a survey of 1,300 people who had worked with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and who were returning to their home countries, 10% were diagnosed as suffering from stress reaction. Stress was defined as *basic* (including initial culture shock, cultural adaptation, and chronic additional stressors not present in the home environment) in a quarter of the stressed cohort. It was *cumulative* (characterized by prolonged exposure to minor foreseeable traumas) in half, and it was *traumatic* (characterized by sudden, unpredictable, and involuntary psychotraumatic events) in 17%. Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) was less common but was present in 7% (De Haan, 1997). The considerable frequency with which these stressors impact missionaries indicates that the wise agency will attempt to select those individuals who have the psychological resilience to cope. It is not just a question of being tough minded but of having the flexibility to rework a strategy in response to the changes which are encountered.

Candidate Selection

There is good evidence that factors which make breakdown during overseas service more likely can be identified during the screening interview of prospective missionary candidates. It is not just the stressor exposure level but also individual vulnerability which determines outcome (Harrison, 1991). On the positive side, Howes and Kealey (1979) suggest that there are characteristics which make potential expatriate workers more resilient, and Lazarus and Folkman (1984) have emphasized that the response to the stressor has important implications regarding the outcome. The following case study illustrates the interplay of the two factors:

> Ruth was a single nurse, aged 35, who worked in an isolated refugee camp, where she faced a high mortality rate and huge work pressures. She had generally coped well in the UK, but after several months working in the refugee camp, she started to react to her line manager, Susan, with frequent angry outbursts, which destabilized their relationship. It became clear that Ruth was unable to cope in the pressured environment of the camp, and the recommendation was made to terminate Ruth's contract prematurely.
>
> During a personal review, Ruth confided that Susan reminded her of her mother, who had rejected her at age five when her twin brothers were born. Soon after their birth, Ruth had become ill and had had a prolonged admission to the hospital, during which her mother did not visit. Ruth still nursed considerable resentment towards her

mother. These factors had not been identified or explored at Ruth's screening interview, and no opportunity to work through these feelings had therefore been offered.

In different circumstances, Ruth might have coped, but it was the combination of unresolved childhood issues and high stressor exposure which led to premature repatriation. Prevention is better than cure. Ideally, Ruth should have had her childhood issues identified at the initial interview. She should have been offered counseling help if she felt she could benefit from it at that stage, and she should have been assigned to a less stressful location, where adequate escapes and supportive relationships were combined.

The Candidate's Psychological Health

Candidate screening is in essence a risk assessment procedure. It aims to exclude the few individuals who will not cope with cultural adaptation, who may be harmed by expatriate life, or who may traumatize others. The screening process also identifies individuals who have attributes that prompt assessors to believe that they will be inter-culturally effective and can be considered "within normal limits," but they have some attributes that also cause some concern. The wise agency will continue to mentor their missionaries throughout their cycle of service to enhance their effectiveness.

The whole screening process, both the interview and the completion of psychometric scales, will be affected by performance bias (wanting to be seen in a favorable light). The confirmatory views of referees, particularly work colleagues, are thus vitally important. Most assessors find that a selection of psychometric scales assists understanding how the applicant functions psychologically, but scales should never be read in isolation and should be interpreted in the context of hearing the candidate's personal story first hand. Candidate strengths must also be assessed and emphasized.

Important issues to be clarified include personal and family history of mental ill health, including both first- and second-degree relatives. Childhood experiences should be explored. How does the candidate perceive the quality of parenting? Were there elements of emotional deprivation which are still functioning in adult life? Was there abuse or serious trauma? A useful and revealing question suggested by experienced missionaries is, *"Is there anything about your childhood which you would change if you had the opportunity?"* (Geoff and Dee Larcombe, personal communication).

How has the applicant coped with stressful situations in the past? Is he/she able to identify a personal style of reaction to stress? If a previous stressful situation was not handled well, what would he/she do differently next time? Sensitive areas include past sexual orientation and the likely future behavior pattern, past alcohol abuse and drug use, marital difficulties, and, for parents, reasonable solutions to the problem areas of child rearing.

"Difficult people" are a common source of stress in expatriate working groups, and in many cases the difficult person has an unhelpful personality trait or a personality disorder. Usually the person with the disorder blames everyone else for the difficulties, and the underlying cause of the conflict only emerges after interviewing a number of stressed individuals who interact with the key figure, the "problem center." It is vital that the cause of relationship stress be accurately identified if appropriate management decisions are to be made. All too often, one or two stressed individuals are repatriated because it is assumed that they are the ones who cannot cope with the pressures of expatriate life. The main or at least a contributing cause, however, can be another staff member who is allowed to continue in post and who will create problems for the next raw recruit. Organizational dysfunction may also mask the problem. The agency may not wish to confront the "problem center" and may find it more

convenient to lay the blame for the relationship difficulty at the door of others.

The concept of personality disorders is well accepted in psychiatric practice, although definition is beset with difficulty. The World Health Organization (1992, pp. 198-224) defines these conditions as deeply ingrained, enduring behavior patterns manifesting with inflexible responses to a broad range of personal and social situations. Individuals with a personality disorder tend to be maladaptive, inflexible, and impaired in social and occupational functioning, and they tend to leave an indelible, negative, and often painful mark on their relationships with others. The prevalence of personality disorders in the general population ranges from 2% to 13% (Marlowe & Sugarman, 1997), so it is inevitable that individuals with these disorders will surface among people working overseas.*

John, whom I saw with a colleague a few years ago, was an example of a selection success, even though the decision was negative:

> A single male aged 40 years with a personal history of mild depression, John had lived during childhood in fear of his father, and as an adult he owned to great difficulty in sharing his feelings with others. His brother was schizophrenic, and John was socially isolated, enjoying solitary activities. His NEO Five Factor Scale (Costa & McCrae, 1990) demonstrated high neuroticism, marked introversion, and very low scores for openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. These results and the general impressions gained during assessment were discussed with John. After reflection, he decided he was unsuitable for the intended location and decided to withdraw his application to the missionary agency.

The Candidate's Physical Health

The candidate medical examination aims to answer the question, *"Is this individual physically fit for work in the environment to which he/she intends to go?"* Physical health screening should be performed, at least in part, by physicians with personal experience of working in developing countries or with specific training in travel medicine. Nurses trained in travel and tropical medicine have an important role in advising on anti-malarial prophylaxis and vaccinations. However, because they are not trained in a sufficient breadth of symptom interpretation, they need the help of medical colleagues for the physical examination of candidates. All candidate assessment is about risk assessment, and agencies need to be aware that no matter how detailed a candidate medical review may be, some unexpected problems are bound to occur.

Over the last couple of years, I (Michael) have seen two medical repatriations. The first one looks as though it may prevent the family from ever returning to the field. A male missionary with very minor palpitations developed serious instability of heart rhythm that has only been partially solved by catheter treatment. The other case is a young mother with a heart condition that caused a serious complication but that remains completely silent on examination by a cardiologist and was only diagnosed after very sophisticated diagnostic procedures.

At least 45 minutes should be allowed for the medical examination of candidates. Some physicians use written symptom questionnaires completed by the candidate prior to history taking, but these may actually increase the length of time it takes to do the assessment. Some feel that questionnaires give focus to an exchange that has to cover a lot of material in a short period of time. There may be a danger, if

* For further reading, see Esther Schubert's (1991) excellent article, in which she applies a three-cluster classification to personality disorders and their impact in expatriate groups.

questionnaires are used to shorten the process, that some issues may be glossed over by time-pressured assessors. Some candidates attempt to cloak important aspects of medical history to enhance the possibility of passing the medical review, and the non-verbal responses to questions may provide vital clues. A medical history should be detailed, covering volunteered current symptoms and a full systematic inquiry. Symptoms should be assessed in the context of the intended destination. The foothills of the Himalayas may not be the best destination for someone with osteoarthritis or significant back problems, but the same person may function well in a less physically demanding location.

Clear contraindications would include conditions like ulcerative colitis with a relapsing remitting course, and unstable angina. Relative contraindications include chronic medical disorders, poorly controlled diabetes or epilepsy, coronary artery heart disease, and abnormality of the heart valves. Some conditions, for instance epilepsy or psoriasis, may worsen if particular anti-malarial prophylactic drugs are used. Seizure control may deteriorate with chloroquine or mefloquine, and alternatives may be prohibitively expensive, much less effective, or unsuitable for long-term use. Asthma, which is well-controlled and has not resulted in hospital admission in the last few years, is not a cause for concern, since in most instances asthma will improve in a different environment with a different pattern of allergens. An important part of the medical review is the detection of previously undiagnosed problems that might become serious and pose a danger to health during service. For instance, anemia and biochemical evidence of iron deficiency suggest chronic blood loss; in post-menopausal women and men over 50 years, a hidden large bowel cancer may be the cause.

Physicians will vary in their choice of screening investigations, and here there are some differences between the UK and North America. A full blood count would be considered normal on both sides of the Atlantic, whereas an erythrocyte sedimentation rate (ESR) is now frowned on in North America. Renal and liver function tests should be performed. The necessity of doing blood lipids can be determined on the basis of family history and age. The storage of serum for later tests is wise. We would add thyroid function, prostate specific antigen, ECG/EKG for heart problems, and mammography for breast cancer, dependent on history, age, and physical examination findings. Some agencies require HIV antibody tests, although we take the view that a careful history and examination, plus the storage of serum which can be tested later, are generally adequate.

In North America and the UK, routine chest radiography is not considered to be necessary. North American physicians will probably wish to perform Mantoux tests (skin tests for TB) in most candidates, whereas in the UK, chest physicians regard a good scar at the site of BCG vaccination as adequate evidence of immunity. Further Mantoux tests are considered unnecessary, unless a candidate is scheduled to perform health care work in a highly TB endemic area. In North America, missionaries will not usually have BCG before travel abroad, but they will have a Mantoux performed prior to departure and on each subsequent home leave. Similarly, in the US mammography will be requested on women over the age of 40 years, in Canada over the age of 50 years, and less often in UK (Mittra, Baum, Thornton, & Houghton, 2000). Assessors on both sides of the Atlantic should be aware that medical fashions differ, and there is no right or wrong approach. All candidates heading for the developing world should have their blood groups ascertained, irrespective of age.

Do healthy children need blood tests prior to travel? Different opinions are held, but there are solid grounds for determining blood groups for all ages. In the event of an accident in a highly HIV endemic country, knowing the blood group will speed up the process of identifying a safe donor, either a parent or other members of a safe donor pool. The blood groups of

children are not normally determined by maternity hospitals, unless there are complications at birth. We find that the "trauma" of blood tests can be minimized by using local anesthetic cream and slender butterfly-type infusion needles for all children up to 10 years and older children who wish it. While taking the sample for a blood group, it makes sense to do a full blood count and any other tests that examination or history suggests are important, since a slightly larger volume in the syringe makes little difference to the trauma of the procedure. The presence of an experienced nurse is a huge advantage, since some parents manage to communicate high levels of anxiety even if they appear calm, and most are not used to holding their children firmly. It should be noted that these children are, in any case, going to countries where blood tests to detect malaria may need to be performed when they are ill and in strange surroundings, and all children will face several episodes of needle contact with pre-travel vaccinations. In this context, a venupuncture, competently performed, does not constitute unacceptable extra trauma.

Physical Health Screening for Returning Missionaries

Normally one hour should be allowed for the medical examination of adults returning from the mission field and 30 minutes for children, although frequently adults need somewhat longer. They may come with a list of problems which they have allowed to accumulate because local medical facilities are poor, producing what amounts to a shopping list of minor or major problems which need attention. A medical history should include asking all missionaries about sexual relationships. It is very unwise to make assumptions at any age. Missionaries are human and make mistakes, sometimes with tragic consequences. It is entirely normal for doctors to experience reservation or feel awkward about inquiring into personal and private areas when taking a medical history. However, the implications of HIV for current and future health and relationships are so important that it is vital that all expatriates be asked about aspects of behavior which may have placed them at risk of infection. As an absolute minimum, we suggest that all returning expatriates be asked, *"Do you have any concerns about HIV transmission?"* In addition to asking about potential non-sexual routes of transmission, most patients should also be asked, *"Have you had any sexual contacts other than your regular partner/wife/husband while you have been abroad?"* *

Some missionaries work in areas of very high HIV prevalence. Even if not involved in health care work, they may have given assistance to the victims of road traffic accidents, or they may have received health care in medical facilities where sterilization procedures are less stringent than in their home country. Pretest discussion and performing an HIV antibody test may remove a huge burden of anxiety. Several years ago, a young woman attended my clinic in the UK for tropical screening following a two-year assignment with an aid agency. When asked whether she had had any sexual partners while in Africa, she hesitantly said, "No," then tearfully related that she had been raped on a train in Central Africa. A man in the restaurant car had misinterpreted their friendly conversation over the dinner table as a sexual invitation and had raped her in the sleeping compartment. An HIV antibody test was fortunately negative. This woman would have remained worried and untested if the question had not been asked.

Our strong preference is to conduct the medical examination prior to a personal review session with another staff member who has counseling skills and who is able to conduct this aspect of the leave medi-

* For a detailed review of the issues surrounding HIV infection and missionaries, see Jones (1999).

cal review in a relaxed and comfortable environment. Important functions of the leave medical examination are:

- To reassure both the sending agency and the missionary that the missionary is well enough to return to the field of service (a few extra investigations buy a significant increment of reassurance).
- To safeguard the financial investment of the sending agency in the missionary.
- As an expression of the value of the missionary to the agency.
- To detect pre-symptomatic chronic medical conditions, which otherwise might precipitate urgent repatriation during the next tour.
- To ensure that any vaccine boosters are given.
- To review anti-malarial prophylaxis.
- To modify medical risk behavior (e.g., swimming in African lakes) or sexual activity that places the missionary at risk.
- To identify significant stressors and advise assistance for stress management and the handling of problematic relationships.

Laboratory Tests

For the benefit of doctors and nurses who may read this chapter, we suggest a wider range of tests is indicated in returning expatriates and should include the following:

- *On all*, do ESR, FBC including eosinophil count, renal function, and hepatic enzymes.
- Add microscopy on a single stool specimen for asymptomatic travelers from developing countries. For those with symptoms, a culture should be reserved, and in such travelers three stool specimens should be sent.
- Add schistosomal serology for any missionaries who have been in direct contact with lake or slow-moving river water in Africa, China, or the Philippines.
- Add strongyloides serology if an eosinophil count is raised.
- Add a filaria ELISA for West and Central Africa.

Divergent views have been expressed regarding the value of screening expatriates returning to their sending countries after periods of service abroad. A large study of over 1,000 people without symptoms seen at the London Hospital for Tropical Diseases (Carroll et al., 1993) found abnormal laboratory results in 25%, about one-fifth with other evidence of parasitic infection, and abnormalities on physical examination in one-third. Many of the parasitic infections would have cleared spontaneously. The authors felt that physical examination added little to practical management, concluding that screening for tropical disease can be carried out by an informed health care worker using structured history taking and relevant lab tests, including HIV test discussion and antibody tests for schistosomiasis (bilharzia) for African lake swimmers.

We take a different view for several reasons. Firstly, in this study, some patients who were classified at the outset as not having symptoms were later found to have significant symptoms and were then excluded from the analysis (C. Dow, personal communication). Second, some patients who appear healthy because they do not volunteer symptoms still have important underlying health issues, which will emerge during a medical consultation. Selective screening of expatriates implies strong background knowledge of geographic aspects of disease. Without this background knowledge, selective screening may erroneously exclude some from more extensive assessment who definitely need it (MacPherson & Kozarsky, 2000). The study also does not address those medical disorders which are age related. Young children are more prone to acquire parasites and other infections than adults. Those who pass the age of 50 years will also be more prone to age related health problems. We agree with Ellis and others that travel should not be over-medicalized (Conlon & Peto, 1993; Ellis, 1993). However, the missionary cohort tend to spend longer overseas than other expatriate groups, tend to integrate more deeply

with the host culture, and often work in areas with higher health risks than the average expatriate. Extra care is therefore appropriate.

A physician's chosen model of medical practice will also influence his/her attitude to routine screening by infectious disease physicians. We know that the *raison d'être* of such specialists is the identification of infectious disease, and most of us in this specialty are a little disappointed when patients are referred with potentially infectious disorders and we fail to find a cunning microbe. However, while identification and diagnostic skills are invaluable for those who screen expatriates, the use of a broader, occupational health model is crucial.

Problem Areas in the Medical Examination of Missionaries

In light of the points identified above, the likelihood of being able to complete an examination in 60 minutes may appear small. For the doctor, there are significant problem areas. Whether or not the examining physician is the family doctor for the missionary family, he/she may only have one look at each family member. We term this challenge "snapshot medicine." Frequently the clues are to be found in "soft" signs that can be easily dismissed as being of no consequence or missed by those who do not know what to look for. For example, seborrheic dermatitis, a mild skin fungal infection, and oral thrush under a denture may indicate underlying HIV infection. Glandular fever virus infection in someone with HIV infection may produce filmy vertical white streaks on the edges of the tongue (oral hairy leucoplakia), which is almost always a reliable sign of HIV infection. It may be missed unless the tongue is not only protruded but also wagged from side to side.

Some years ago, I (Michael) saw a returning missionary who at examination had two abnormal physical signs: a mildly raised pulse rate and a cardiac murmur. She did not have sweaty palms, a fine finger tremor, or the eye signs of an overactive thyroid gland. Because I was concerned about the presence of the murmur, I asked her family doctor to refer her to a cardiologist. By the time this had been arranged several months later, the physical signs were much more obviously those of an overactive thyroid. Thyroid function tests confirmed this and provided a more-than-adequate explanation for the murmur and the raised resting pulse rate. With the benefit of hindsight, I would now order thyroid function tests in any patient with these minimal signs. It was an important diagnosis to make, and the woman would almost certainly have been repatriated from the field in a much worse state of health, if she had returned overseas without this condition being identified.

Problems in this pre-symptomatic phase at medical review that are missed or underestimated may cause major difficulty after return to the field, as the following story illustrates:

> David was a 43-year-old missionary working in West Africa. At detailed review in the UK, it emerged that fresh water contact made the possibility of the bowel form of schistosomiasis (bilharzia) likely. He was mildly anemic and had traces of blood in his feces. These results were sent to his family doctor, who later referred him to a surgical clinic after David also developed intermittent abdominal pain. The surgeons performed an ultrasound examination of his abdomen, which was normal. They also performed a colonoscopy, but the instrument could not be advanced through the entire colon.
>
> David was considered clear of serious causes for his chronic blood loss and returned to West Africa, but three months later he was repatriated with severe anemia. At laparotomy, a colonic cancer was found in the segment which the surgeons had not been able to visualize. This was resected, and despite its relatively advanced stage, David thank-

fully remains well with no signs of recurrence 10 years later.

Fatigue in Returning Missionaries

Fatigue may be difficult to interpret. Missionaries may simply be travel weary or jet lagged if seen within a few days of arrival in their home country, or they may be depressed. Debbie Lovell (1997) found that 40% of aid workers reported "depression" occurring either during or after service. In missionaries making their final return to their home country, tiredness may be a symptom of bereavement, although usually there will be other clear features, as illustrated below:

> A 60-year-old missionary returned after a lifetime of service in an African country, where she had also grown up as a missionary kid. She was unwisely advised to make a clean break with the past and arrived in the UK with a couple of suitcases and little to remind her of her life's work. She had only a few aging relatives and found that being in the UK carried no sense of being at home at all. At medical review, she was generally fatigued but was also disturbed to find herself bursting into tears for no apparent reason. She found it difficult to speak at public meetings, because she was not sure that she could retain emotional control.
>
> At interview, it was clear that she was experiencing classical bereavement symptoms, having lost a great part of her personal identity in leaving her adopted country. We advised that she be exempted from the public speaking commitments with which she did not feel able to cope, encouraged her to enlarge photographs she had taken in Africa to decorate her new flat, and encouraged her to talk about the life that she had left behind in an environment where she felt safe and accepted. The opportunity developed for her to return to work for another year in the same country. During this additional tour, she was able to adjust to her final departure with much greater ease, this time returning with important physical reminders of her life's work.

Chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS) is not uncommon in the missionary cohort. The old term of myalgic encephalomyelitis (ME) is no longer used and is misleading, since it implies an inflammation of the nervous system, of which exhaustive research has failed to find any evidence. Nor is there any reliable evidence of chronic viral infection. While some patients become ill with CFS after viral illnesses, it may follow bereavement or trauma, suggesting a variety of precipitating factors. CFS tends to attract strongly polarized views, and a balanced attitude will include the possibility that some patients have unidentified physical causes, while psychosocial factors predominate in others. At the turn of the 20th century, 20% of missionaries were repatriated with symptoms that now sound very similar to modern definitions of CFS. Repatriation was more frequent among those working in Japan than those working in China, India, or Africa.

More recent research suggests that CFS is quite common in expatriates (Lovell, 1999). I (Michael) have the impression, unsupported by clear data, that CFS clusters in certain types of missionary activity, and this may reflect the personality structures of those attracted to this kind of work. When physicians have seen large numbers of such patients, they become aware that the invalid or disabled role is one that may have positive benefits and may even achieve a strong degree of control over others or over the working environment. It may prevent posting to a less desirable location, or it may act as a magnet for the support of others with whom the patient relates closely. I have gained the impression that personal insight among missionary patients with CFS is sometimes limited, and the gains from ill-

ness, which may be apparent to an outside observer, are often denied by the sufferer (Jones, 1996). Lovell (1999) found an open attitude towards causation among her patients, and she noted that expatriates with CFS tend to be hard working, to have an overactive pre-morbid lifestyle, and to have experienced stressful life events in the period leading up to the onset of CFS.

Several medical conditions may present with fatigue as a symptom, including anemia, hepatitis, intestinal infections with single-cell organisms such as amoebiasis, giardiasis, bacterial infections such as brucellosis, and worm infections such as schistosomiasis. These should be excluded before the label of CFS is applied, but most of these may also act as trigger factors for CFS. A recent study by workers at the London Hospital for Tropical Diseases demonstrated that tiredness is the most common symptom in schistosomiasis, occurring in 50% of those with confirmed infection with this fluke (Whitty et al., 2000).

Trauma

Personal violence is more likely in the developing world than in the developed West, due to both war and criminal activity. Some organizations like ICRC have seen a transition over the last decade from their workers being relatively protected from personal violence to being deliberate targets. Sometimes those who have been quite seriously traumatized will volunteer nothing about what has happened, but they may disclose more on direct, sensitive questioning, as the following case history demonstrates:

> A 30-year-old man was sent by his family doctor to my tropical clinic for screening for schistosomiasis. Due to a cancellation, I had more time available and ascertained during history taking that all had not gone well on his last trip. He had been the leader and truck driver of an overland safari. The convoy was held up by bandits, wholesale robbery ensued, and young women were raped in front of their companions, while all were threatened with death by machete. The trauma extended beyond the initial incident, as the man subsequently arranged for the hospitalization of the rape victims and post-exposure anti-HIV drugs to be flown from another country. He was still disabled by deep anger and accepted the offer of time with a staff counselor.

Mixed Pictures

Sometimes it is very difficult to sort out the relative contributions of contributory factors. In the following case history, there were personnel management deficits in the expatriate community, anti-malarial prophylaxis was not being wisely handled, and post-traumatic stress disorder intermingled with a serious tropical virus infection to cause repatriation.

> Sam was a 50-year-old pilot working in Asia. He had operated a light aircraft service in a developed country, but after arrival in Asia he experienced difficulty integrating with other expatriates, who treated him as an inexperienced junior missionary despite his wealth of flying experience. The first traumatic incident was the serious illness of his wife, who developed cerebral malaria. Sam attempted to fly her to the hospital, but as he was taking off, a tire burst and he slowed to a halt, narrowly avoiding crashing. He had a further near-fatal aircraft incident a few months later. While flying over difficult terrain, he heard a loud explosion from his engine. His passengers were church leaders who realized that the situation was serious, and they began praying fervently. Sam was certain he would crash, but the engine kept running despite oil pressure registering zero. The engine continued to run until he reached an airstrip,

where he landed safely. When he inspected the engine, he found that a cylinder head had blown off.

Some months later, Sam had an illness with fever and crippling joint pains that persisted for months afterwards. He also started to have disturbing dreams with flashbacks reliving the trauma. The clear primary diagnosis was PTSD, and primary management comprised counseling. The joint pains still needed further assessment. A rheumatologist diagnosed early seronegative rheumatoid arthritis, but viral serology subsequently identified an uncommon tropical virus as the cause. Other issues that needed attention included revision of antimalarial prophylaxis for both Sam and his wife.

Is All This Effort by Medical Doctors Worth It?

What is the evidence that thorough medical examination of returning missionaries is not a waste of time? As indicated above, medical review is not just about detection of medical disorder. It also functions to identify psychological health issues and has an eye to protection in the future with vaccines and altered antimalarial prophylaxis. A medical student, Kirsteen Wintour, and one of the authors (Michael) are assessing the results of over 600 routine medical examinations done between 1990 and 2000. The examinations were performed under the auspices of Care for Mission (CFM) at a clinic in the Scottish Borders and after its relocation at the Elphinstone International Health Centre (EIHC) near Edinburgh. The data mentioned below are not yet finalized but are largely reliable.

The age range of the patient group varied widely, between one year and 74 years, and the mean duration of overseas service was longer than among most expatriate groups, at nine years. Of the group, 290 worked in Africa, 72 in South America, 25 in Europe, and one was reviewed after completing a world tour on behalf of his agency. The patients were examined according to a standard protocol, including history, examination, and a battery of laboratory tests, as described above.

Abnormal results were found in 16% of samples sent to both a hematology and biochemical laboratory, and microbiologists found parasites or abnormal bacteria in 9% of stool samples. Examination of the urine was abnormal in 14%, and chemical tests detected blood in 2.3% of stool samples. Antibody tests on blood detected schistosomiasis in 15% of the 100 missionaries who reported exposure to suspect fresh water.

Important first-time diagnoses included HIV infection, pulmonary TB, malaria, strongyloides infection, schistosomiasis, inadequately treated onchocerciasis, pernicious anemia, adult coeliac disease, chronic hepatitis C, primary biliary cirrhosis, chronic proliferative glomerulonephritis, transitional cell bladder carcinoma, prostatic carcinoma, renal calculus with non-functioning kidney, diabetes mellitus, inadequately treated subthyroidism, and hyperthyroidism. Two referrals to CFM/EIHC resulted in nullification of diagnoses made abroad of heart valve disorder and chronic inflammation of the liver, respectively.

In over 200 patients, referral to a specialist hospital service was recommended, and for one-fifth referral to more than one hospital department was recommended. In 13, the family doctor had already commenced referral following a patient consultation prior to review at EIHC, one of these for suspected (and later confirmed) breast cancer. The family doctor refused to make the referral recommended by CFM/EIHC in three cases, on the mistaken grounds that the patients were not eligible for free treatment in the National Health Service, and these patients returned to overseas service without specialist review. The most common destination hospital specialties for referrals were gastroenterology, cardiology, and renal medicine/urology. The results of hospital review were

only available in 70 of the 215 referred patients, but in 52/70 (75%) referral resulted in a change in management.

To summarize, careful medical evaluation of returning missionaries, working predominantly in the developing world, yields abnormalities on clinical examination or laboratory tests, and it indicates the need for referral to specialist services in about one-third. In those for whom a hospital report was available, management was changed in three-quarters.

Conclusion

Medically speaking, missionary service is far safer in the early 21st century than in the early 20th century. Some physical health risks are becoming more common, and deaths from RTAs or violence appear to be increasing. Candidate assessment needs to identify those with the physical and psychological stamina to cope in demanding environments. Such assessment should be carried out by physicians and other health care professionals with understanding, experience, and requisite skills. The evaluation of missionaries on leave needs adequate time, knowledge of tropical and travel medicine, and good clinical skills. Known problems accumulated during overseas service need attention, and the medical examination should be thorough enough to detect serious problems that are not yet causing symptoms. Personal review sessions should help to detect those with important emotional health issues. Limited research data suggest that the effort is worthwhile, and there is a significant yield of important medical problems. Those who risk much in the service of their Risen Lord deserve appropriately thorough medical care.

Reflection and Discussion

1. How thorough are the pre-field screening and furlough evaluation for medical problems in your organization? How could the screening and examination processes be improved?

2. What are the main illnesses that affect workers in your setting/region? Are there some ways to better prevent these problems?

3. Road traffic accidents (RTAs) are a leading cause of injury and impairment for expatriates. Discuss how your organization can help prevent RTAs and other types of accidents (see chapter 35).

4. What are some of the main health care books, websites, medical centers, and medical specialists that are/could be used for workers in your organization?

5. How could an organization with limited funds still provide adequate medical coverage for its personnel?

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35

Health and Safety Guidelines For Preventing Accidents

InterHealth
People In Aid

This chapter outlines principles for giving advice to field staff and for drawing up accident guidelines. It will be particularly useful for personnel or human resource managers and field or programme managers. Employers have a duty of care to all field staff, but everyone has a role in ensuring safety!

An aid worker had been killed in a motorbike accident the week before I hopped on a moped after work without a helmet. I was tired and didn't want to wait for a lift home by car. I hit the only cement-lined drainage ditch in Burundi head first. It needn't have happened—I just didn't think.

As this story shows, many accidents result from human error—in other words, they are avoidable and can be prevented. Accidents are the most common cause of death, serious injury, and emergency repatriation among travellers abroad (World Health Organization, 1998). The most common of these are road accidents, swimming accidents, and household accidents.

Accident prevention guidelines are the single most important set of guidelines your agency can use to protect staff from avoidable injury or death. Field staff and their families must be aware of the importance of preventing accidents before they happen. They need to be given clear advice on accident prevention and response. They also need to understand the agency's accident guidelines and should agree to adhere to them.

Giving Advice

We were driving to Ruhengeri in Rwanda, four of us. I was in the front and noticed that the others in the back weren't wearing their seat belts. "Shouldn't you put those seat belts on?" I said. "Yes," they said, but they didn't put them on. These two were doctors!

Getting the message across requires persistence and patience! As one staff health officer said, "First timers are interested, but the old timers think they know it all."

The advice you give to staff will be based on information from *local risk assessments*. These should be carried

out by appropriately qualified and experienced managers, and they should be regularly updated. Advice will, of course, vary according to the person, the job, and the circumstances in the region or country. Here are some suggestions for giving advice:

- Find out what staff and their families already know and what they need and want to know.
- Give people advice face-to-face, not just in writing. Talk through with them scenarios that have actually happened.
- Make sure that staff have read, understand, and agree to adhere to your agency's accident guidelines.
- Train staff in the use of First Aid procedures, where appropriate.
- Make sure field managers include accident prevention in team meetings. Ask them to report back to you on this! Staff could give presentations on accident prevention. This is a sure way to remember and promote key principles!

Accident Prevention Guidelines

Accident prevention guidelines are an important part of the advice you give. They tell staff:

- How to minimise accident risk.
- How to respond if an accident occurs.

Don't assume that experience is transferable between different countries. An appropriate response in one country may be dangerous or offensive in another.

Get field staff involved when developing or reviewing guidelines—this way they're more likely to remember and use them! Your guidelines should cover prevention of road, household, and swimming accidents. These areas follow next.

Safe Road Travel

From the moment's inattention that risks tragedy, to the driver deliberately flouting speed and drinking laws, traffic accidents are both an everyday part of life and a worsening global disaster.... By 1990, traffic accidents were assessed to be the world's ninth biggest cause of death, killing at least 500,000 people a year, though some put the fatality figure as high as a million, and injuring around 15 million (World Disasters Report, 1998).

Agencies must actively prepare field staff to travel safely by road or to drive or ride motor vehicles. Consider these top priorities:

Top Priorities

- Keep vehicles in good repair through regular, competent servicing and regular inspection of brakes, tyres, steering, and lights. Train staff who use or drive/ride vehicles in the essentials of maintenance. Keep records of vehicle maintenance and staff training.
- Fit seat belts to both front and rear seats in passenger and goods vehicles, and provide helmets and protective clothing for motor cycle users. Using seat belts is the single most important way of saving lives—ensure they are used by all, even for the shortest journey. Even if seat belts or helmets are not required by law, they should still be used.
- Choose passenger and goods vehicles that have air conditioning, if possible, and good seats. These are not luxuries; they help prevent heat exhaustion, discomfort, and distraction.
- Assume incompetence in motorcycle, four-wheel, HGV, off-road, defensive, and safe driving/riding until you are proved wrong. Ensure drivers are licensed and competent to use programme vehicles.
- Ensure motor cyclists wear crash helmets, even for the shortest journeys. They also need heavy-duty footwear, gloves, and jackets. Sandals and t-shirts give no protection.
- Never allow drivers or riders to use vehicles when under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- Plan journeys and allow enough time to avoid having to travel at unsafe speeds or at night. Except in emergencies, avoid driving when excessively tired or for prolonged periods without a break.

- Except in emergencies, avoid using two-way radios while driving.
- Avoid driving without a co-driver on long journeys.
- Ensure all vehicles carry a First Aid kit, a working torch, and leather gloves. Ensure staff understand how to apply First Aid procedures.
- Set up a "Trusted Donor List" or other safe blood donor scheme and procedure, in case blood transfusion is needed after serious accidents.

Household Safety

One day my cat caught a squirrel. I rescued the squirrel but got bitten in the process. I needed a course of rabies jabs, but Sri Lanka had no serum stocks—all the doctors had run out. In the end, another agency in Colombo managed to find me some. But if I had been cut off from the capital because of the war, it could have been a different story.

In Britain, we know that accidents in the home account for more injuries and deaths than road accidents. They are described as the "hidden epidemic" by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents. Children and those over 65 are particularly vulnerable to accidents in the home. But human error, stress, change of routine, and unsafe practices all contribute to an environment in which *anyone* can be at risk in a new or temporary home. Families with children can be particularly vulnerable.

Top Priorities

- Carry out a risk assessment of housing or temporary accommodation, including hotels and their surroundings, before signing agreements or on first arrival. Take into account the needs of families with young children and other family members with special needs. Think about your responsibilities towards domestic staff too.
- When assessing risks, consider the most common causes of household injuries and deaths in the home. These will include electric shocks and unsafe wiring (e.g., in showers); burns and scalding (e.g., from house/cooking fires and kitchen equipment); slips, trips, and falls, inside or from stairs, windows, or balconies; cuts, including from glass in doors and windows; being bitten or stung by animals or insects; drowning (a child can drown in as little as three inches of water); and poisoning (e.g., by medicines or household chemicals).
- Assessments should consider the extent to which local factors might increase these common risks. For example: climate; construction, including layout, emergency exits, and wiring; culture shock, change of routine, change of accommodation, stress; access to clean water; access to alcohol; presence of rabies or malaria; isolation of posting and/or lack of access to transport.
- Wherever possible, ensure provision of fire extinguishers, fire blankets, and smoke alarms.
- Ensure individuals and/or households have a First Aid kit.

Safe Swimming

I had a day off and took a minibus out of Accra to the coast. I was on my own and planned to spend a couple of hours on the beach. The waves didn't look too high, and I am a strong swimmer, but I wasn't prepared for what happened. I was dragged down by the undertow and rolled like a ball inside the wave. To this day, I'm not sure how I got out. Afterwards, I realised I should have found out about that particular stretch of coast and shouldn't have gone alone.

Top Priorities

Advise staff to:

- Find out how safe local beaches, lakes, rivers, or swimming pools are.
- Swim only in waters free from dangerous currents, severe pollution, and the presence of dangerous fauna.
- Swim within their depth.
- Swim with a companion rather than alone; supervise children at all times.

- Avoid swimming after consumption of alcohol or a heavy meal. Alcohol can create a false sense of security and can induce people to swim alone or stay too long in cold water.
- Avoid running along the edge of hotel or public swimming pools, diving into cloudy pools, or diving into any pool without first checking the water depth.

In Case of Accident or Near Misses

Top Priorities

- Apply local guidelines on safe response to accidents. Remember that a safe, appropriate response can differ from country to country.
- Apply safe blood donor scheme procedures. Do not use locally available blood from unknown sources, except in extreme circumstances.
- Follow insurance and agency procedures to enable removal to specialist hospitals in-country or abroad, if necessary.
- See that all accidents are reported to the local and head offices, and record details in writing.
- Investigate accidents that result in serious injury or death.
- Keep an accident book in field offices. In line with the People In Aid Code, keep records of injuries, accidents, and fatalities, and use them to help assess and reduce further risk to field staff and their families.
- Use records to compare your agency's performance with that of others.

Reflection and Discussion

1. What did you find most useful about the information in these guidelines?
2. How could these guidelines be improved?
3. Which accidents are most common in your organization?
4. What policies have helped contribute to accident prevention in your agency?
5. How do you use or plan to use these guidelines in your agency?

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