

ADULT PREPARATION FOR MISSIONS

INTRODUCTION

One of the most wonderful things in life is to enter the vineyard of the Lord and to start serving the King of Kings. Unfortunately not everyone is successful. Sad to say there are many unnecessary casualties. This lecture covers 7 different steps of preparation for mission service that will help you to avoid becoming a casualty.

Often people are saved out of a life of sin as a mature adult or middle-aged person. Or they have been bogged down in a life of material things and had their spiritual eyes opened only late in life. Now these precious people want to show their appreciation to the Lord Jesus and do something for Him. They are HOT for Jesus and they want to get involved. They want to accomplish something while health and strength are still there. The very first basic step in getting ready is to do the *Basic Christian Life* course and then enroll in New Life courses. After serving in their home churches many of these dear people are willing to sacrifice their own comforts and become a church-planting missionary. How should they get themselves ready to reproduce spiritually and become founders of churches?

There is just one little problem and that is: missionary statistics. Missionary statistics show that 80% of all new missionaries that go out become shipwrecked on the sea of humanity. Eighty percent of wonderful dedicated Christian couples are forced to leave their field of service before their due date. Eighty percent of God's choice servants can't complete the task they set out to do. Eighty percent of the chosen ones become bitter and quit or come home in shame. This lecture focuses on some very key elements that make or break a missionary couple. Listen well, prepare well! Avoid casualties. If you desire to prepare yourself for mission work here are 7 steps each with a time frame. This lecture covers seven important preparatory steps. Each step covers a different area and aspect but is a vital link in becoming a wise and well-prepared missionary capable of long term service. A suggested time frame has been given for each step. The total time frame is usually about 1 ½ years, however it varies from couple to couple and may be anywhere from one to two years.

I. TAKE A MISSION WORK TRIP

You have an idea, you have a longing, or maybe just an adventurous spirit. Take a short — 2 week trip anywhere. Get out of your town and country and do some initial exploring in another country. You will return either with a taste for more or else the conviction “never again.”

A. Suggested time frame:

Summer time

Usually jobs are more flexible in summer time. Bosses are more lenient. Travel is often easier and one gets a better picture of the new surroundings than in wintertime.

B. A vision trip is fun and easy

Making travel arrangements and taking a trip are easy to do without having to go on a limb. Many people travel and a bit special adventuresome plan is not all that outlandish. This is an exploratory venture, not a commitment to become a missionary.

1. Use Vacation

Use your vacation time and money. There is nothing wrong with a working vacation. Thousands upon thousands have found new perspectives on life through a working vacation.

2. Tiny Commitment



This is a tiny commitment. It doesn't bind you with great commitments to a sending church or the missionaries you are visiting. Yet this tiny commitment serves as a forerunner of the real thing. The things you have to plan, the farewells, the travel, the jet lag, the culture shock, all of these and many more juggle you lose for that great event that is to come.

C. Avoid becoming a casualty

Learn to share of your own resources and learn to have victory in and over your financial situations.

How? Save money for it. Don't be dependent on others! Make your vision known and trust God. If funds come in praise Him and thank Him. If not, be prepared by having savings ready. Be willing with family agreement to sell some items. Be sure that all things done at this stage have full family approval.

II. LOVE YOUR ENEMY

This is step two. You have returned from your trip and you want to go on with it. What now? Because of language and cultural barriers missionaries are constantly misunderstood or misunderstand. Priority one is to focus on communications and human relations. One of the most difficult commands Jesus has given us is to love our enemies, but it solves many problems. How can you do that?

A. Suggested time frame:

After your summer trip use fall time for this project. The fall is an excellent time to get serious and start preparing yourself. Temptations, testings and difficulties are everyday fare for missionaries. The earlier you can get ready the better. Give God ample time to mold you into His spiritual shape to become a victorious believer.

B. The biggest long-term problem/difficulty is human relationships

Difficulties, problems testings nearly always center around relationships. Face it squarely; your missionary ministry will be greatly hindered and influenced if you leave broken and hurt relationships behind. So start now on getting old wounds healed, relationships restored. Make peace as much as is possible with all men, especially believers, your church, family, friends and relatives, and close worldly neighbors or colleagues. This is a Bible requirement! This is a must for a future of victorious Christian living on the mission field.

1. *Select 1-3 people*

Begin by selecting a few people and begin with them. Do not attempt restoration with many at one time.

2. *Choose someone close*

The tenderest issues are those closest to our heart — in-laws, long ago bosom friends now separated, and others. If God gives you grace in these areas your missionary calling will be greatly strengthened.

C. Avoid becoming a casualty *

Misunderstanding, hurts, broken relationships are the most common things a missionary must get victory over if he is going to endure and last a long enough time to make a major impact.

1. *Major Hurdle — Grudge*

A grudge might be held by you or by someone else against you, but it debilitates your missionary service. You are in bondage, prayer is short-circuited, results are fleshly not spiritual. Your life and ministry will be under bondage. This is the time to become free. Anything that is lacking in your relationships will eventually be used in an attempt to bring you down, destroy you or ruin your spiritual work and missionary career.

2. *Be on good terms with everyone*

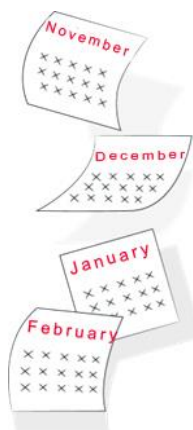
Let nothing stop you from becoming spiritually free and holy. Be on good terms with everyone. Sow more bountifully than you ever have. Go forth weeping and you will doubtless come again rejoicing bearing your fruit with you.

III. STUDY THE SCRIPTURES

You need some good Bible knowledge or else how are you going to share the gospel and demonstrate it with your lifestyle? After your summer trip and along with your human relations project begin serious Bible study.

A. Suggested time frame:

The winter months with long dark evenings provide great study opportunities. November through February. This is the time one can buckle down, take in weekend seminars, and do correspondence courses.



B. Bible study

There is a great variety of ways to get Biblical knowledge. We suggest survey courses. Don't get hung up on deep theological studies. Stick with Bibliology. Forget about the original languages. Chances that you in later life will become a language expert are slim. So trust the accuracy of Godly translators whom God appointed and gifted to translate His Word. Instead of studying Greek and Hebrew stick with a variety of translations which give you fresh insights. Stay away from commentaries. Commentaries are simply biased human comments on a passage that keep you from discovering the Word of God for yourself. Through commentaries your senses become blunted and the study of the Bible becomes dull. Instead be mesmerized with the gold mine of riches God has awaiting in His Word just for you.

1. *Love God*

The whole question for a future missionary who will mostly work alone in an isolated place among unbelievers is to get God's heartbeat. To fall in love with Him, to want nothing more than that sweet peace that comes from total unity of will with his Best Friend. To love God you have to know the Bible. "If you love Me, obey Me."

2. *Know Him*

The better a church planting missionary knows God, the more unbelievers will respect him. People everywhere seem to have a sixth sense about how really purely holy and close to God a Christian worker is, and out of that sixth sense they respond. To know God you must know His revelation the Bible. Now is the time to draw nigh unto God and He will draw nigh unto you.

C. Avoid becoming a casualty

What needs to be developed during this time is a deep inner victory that will carry you through the rough spots until death parts you from this life. To avoid future casualties learn to burn your bridges behind you now. No turning back, no turning back. Never, no, never.

1. *Knowing saves on praying*

The better you know the scriptures the better you know God's general will for the world and all of creation, and the better you can apply it to His specific plan for your personal life. Knowing the Word of God will save on praying. Very much of the will of God, including the future, can be known and prayers can be shorter more targeted and focused mostly on the giving of thanks. Knowing helps to just share some ideas and let the Holy Spirit intercede for us.

2. *Live opposite to the world*

A lifestyle dramatically opposite to that of your Christian peers and even more specifically to that of the worldly people around you needs to be developed at this time. Through generations of exposure your home church and leaders have come to accept cultural values and standard ways of doing things that

exclude the very best Jesus has for us. There is “a second rest” waiting for you and now is the time to discover that and enter into it if you so desire.

3. **Contrasting Lifestyle**

As a missionary you will need to live in great contrast to the people around you in order to demonstrate the divineness of your relationship to the Almighty. What we need today are mighty men and women of God. People who can spend 40 days on the mountain. People who can live with the widow of Zarephath.

IV. FINANCIAL FREEDOM

Finances are a crucial daily part of life. When Jesus prepared the apostles He talked more about money than about faith. Your human relations and financial dealings basically determine your failure or success.

A. Suggested time frame:

Winter months — February through March. You need at least 6 months of your new lifestyle before you should go.

It takes a lot of determined practice to obtain financial control that will see you through in another culture. Often there is no regular banking system, or there is a monthly inflationary currency. Perhaps for months on end you will have to live without any money but exist by bartering. Take time now to become financially free.

B. No debts



1. **No Credit Cards**

Get rid of all your credit cards now. If a card is required for work or other activity switch over to a **Debit Card**. A debit card allows you to do the same transactions as a credit card but with money deposited in your account previously.

2. **Get Rid of all Debt**

Get rid of all debt. No mission organization wants to send you with huge debts. A sacrificial missionary income does not allow you to make financial payments back home. Banking institutions would instantly want to liquidate your entire assets if they discovered you were skipping the country.

Indebtedness is another major hurdle missionary candidates need to overcome.

3. **Savings program — save one month's salary per year**

Ideally develop a lifetime habit of saving one month's salary annually. It will give you all kinds of financial freedom in case of emergencies. And emergencies do come. No one has ever lived without facing an emergency sometime. So the question is not “if” but “when.” Be ready. By all means learn to cut down on your lifestyle now and develop a safety mentality. Begin a small monthly savings program now. Ten percent for God and 10% for savings is a fine safe financial decision you can live with for a lifetime.

C. Minimum personal requirements

1. **Discover Your Minimum Comfort Zone**

Learn to live with minimal personal requirements. Discover your minimal comfort level. All of us have a lot of “extras” in our lives on which we have become semi-dependent. There are close relatives, money, salary, many material goods, sports, luxuries, cultural activities and so on. Somehow all these things seem to have become more or less a necessity in our lives. Yet subconsciously we sense this is a false dependence, that we don't really need all of these things. We may actually even feel that some of these things are more of a burden or an obligation that weighs us down. We might feel better off if we were without them, if we could escape them but our culture expects it from us. Now is the time to free yourself from these.

2. **Not Sacrifice but Contentment**

The idea is not to sacrifice your family to a substandard level of living that continually aggravates. That would eventually not work. You will burnout on that. Discover the minimal comfort level on which you can continually live and function well with joy. The Bible encourages us to learn contentment. God is basically not interested in sacrifice. Remember that nearly all missionary efforts require greater and more drastic adjustment for the wife than for the husband. Be sure there is mutual agreement and unity. Give deference, Peter tells us, to your wife.

3. Christian Maximum Investments — 10% — 90%

Discover new financial ways, opportunities and freedoms by beginning to invest more than your usual 10% tithe. Get into giving gifts way beyond that. God owns it all and to Him it is simply a transfer from one account to another. The more we learn to give the closer we are to the heart of God. We can never outgive God. If giving is done in prayer you will discover that there is always more where that came from.

D. Avoid becoming a casualty *

When you have no debts and you have learned what your minimal comfort zone is, you have made major strides in avoiding becoming a missionary casualty. Add to that a savings program and a mentality of making Christian investments and you will find your financial life very drastically changed from those around you. You will discover an unprecedented freedom that you never even thought possible. Believe it or not there is actually a God who wishes to take care of you if you would just let Him. Good luck! Here is one more decision to make.

Learn to become free from the control of finances. Learn to make your decisions spiritually, on the will of God and not on financial means. If you have no money obviously you cannot go, but if you do have enough money it does not automatically follow that you should go or that you should go now. God basically does not lead by providing material provisions or withholding them. He often confirms His leading afterwards with material or financial provisions but He does not guide that way. Nowhere in scripture do we see God's leading on the basis of a financial plan. Hudson Taylor said that ***"Gods work done in God's way will not lack His provision."***

V. JOIN THE SERVICE

You need practice. You need to become skilled. At home you know the culture and the language so it is an ideal place to practice teaching, preaching, discussion skills and practical down to earth care for people.

A. Suggested time frame:

March or early spring, or near the end of your Bible studies.

You have now learned a tremendous amount about spiritual living. This should give you self-control, financial control and time control and now you can put that to use in a part time ministry for the Lord at home.

B. Local ministry in the church

The church is Christ's invention. It is His "thing." His earthly Kingdom consists of churches. He wants His people to minister in and through and for the church. Learn now how it functions. Discover its human frailties and learn to get victory over them. You will find that there are all kinds of needs, even though many may not be to your liking. Just jump in and get busy. God knows when you need a promotion to match your giftings and He will see that you get it in His most perfect timing.

C. Out of the church on your own

Don't just wait for the church to direct you however. Your spiritual ministry must not just be an official job. It must be or become your lifestyle. It must be something that permeates your whole being every waking moment of your life. People are going to hell everywhere.

D. Commitment to Lead Someone to the Lord

Make a commitment **not** to go to some mission field until God has given you **souls** at home. Kneel down and make a humble commitment to lead a soul to Jesus Christ for personal salvation. Ask the Lord to guide you. Ask Him to give you a burden for an individual.

E. Avoid becoming a casualty *

Casualties come in different formats. One of the greatest devilish delights is to sidetrack you into doing the minors instead of the majors. The evil one loves for you to be busy indirectly. And oh how good that can feel. Satan most certainly does not want you to win souls in groups, in nucleuses that would become growing and reproducing entities called new churches. What will be your focus? What priority are you going to set for yourself? Why are you actually going to the mission field?

F. Don't go unless you've led someone to the Lord

The mission field abounds with missionaries who never ever lead a soul to Christ. Don't become a member of that shameful club. Don't go to the field with blood stained hands of lost souls at home that you could have led to repentance and salvation. Go to the field bearing in your holy hands the seeds of fruitfulness at home. Paul was saved near Damascus and that is where he started. ***Don't go unless you have led someone to Christ first.***

VI. GATHER INFO

This is getting serious! You need to begin all over from scratch again. It is like getting married and moving across the country, only worse. You are now going to select a new permanent place to live. It means you will need to learn a new language. Basically there is no return. Better get the right info and get all the info you can, and get it sorted out. Now is the time to make the right decision!

A. Suggested time frame

Fall and winter, any time you have completed your initial Bible studies and successfully completed your practicum.

After you have gained some credible spiritual ministry at home it is time to look into making permanent connections with a sending agency. This might be a support group, your local church, a mission organization or perhaps through a business venture. The world has now shrunk to set before you every imaginable place and possibility. First, get all the info you can and then become selective.

B. Find or become a mission info person for your target area

Begin by surfing the internet. Focus on two areas of interests, the people you are interested in and the type of job or ministry you would like to do. By this time you probably already have an inkling or strong feeling toward a specific target. If so, drop all other info and focus on your target. The more info you can gather the better. Check if there is a local Mission Info Center, a mission organization or even a church in another denomination which might give you more personal contacts.



C. Info wall/center in local church

Many churches are greatly lacking in mission vision. Most church members are only vaguely aware of missions and missionaries and blissfully ignorant of any details about what a real missionary's life and work involve. You might be the person God wants to use to reinvigorate your church for missions before He sends you off to Beulah land. Ask your church leaders to let you use an unused blank church wall to post a map with a missions display. This might be a big step forward for your church's missions.

D. Rotate person/center/material

As time goes on, see who becomes interested in your display. Ask God to lay it on someone's heart and begin to involve that person so he/she can follow through with it after you have gone. Rotate the material or the design monthly. You can follow seasonal themes. If it catches on make a portable presentation that you and your trainee can share in different groups. (Keep presentations short 5-7 minutes). The whole idea is for the church people to begin to talk about missions.

E. Get mission organizations and fields together

Each organization has its own character, so has each country and people group. Begin matching those organizations and people groups that have the most in common and which seem to click with your interests. Write several simultaneously and then go for interviews. Remember this is a dual interview. They are interviewing you and you are interviewing them. Each is presenting their best side. It is a good idea to also gather other background info about the realities of how their ministry is functioning.

F. Think "new frontiers"

Europe/ communist/ Muslim/Isolated groups

It is time to reach the unreachable. The more isolated or specific your target, the more fruitful you can expect it to be. All over the world the children have been wasting their food but the "dogs" under the table are starving for the crumbs. Be real; don't take an easy way out! Get out there and do a man's job!

G. Avoid becoming a casualty

1. In-depth expedition

After making your preliminary decision go for an in-depth vision trip to the site you will actually be living at. Investigate the work you will be doing in detail. Check the housing situation where you will actually be living. Spend time with the local mission leaders and other missionaries. Get their pulse on the way they operate. They will be over you and you will have to become submissive to them. Also get involved in several ways with the local people to whom you will be ministering.

2. Involve your wife

If you are married it is an absolute must for your wife to go along at this point. If you can't afford for both of you to go, then send her and you stay home. It is that crucial. Most mission organizations treat wives as extra appendages rather than the key family factor around which success or failure evolves. The husband is happy doing what he wants to do. She has to stay at home. He gets to learn the language and gets a translator and very often she doesn't. Yet she must do all the shopping of unknown food, she must talk to the schoolteachers, and she is the main person to communicate with doctors and nurses.

If your wife is the sweet, laid back and trusting type who wants to leave the decision making to you and just follow her precious husband, she is a prime candidate for a casualty. If she refuses to go on a preliminary visit, it shows that she has not really come to grips with reality yet. The wife is not in a primary situation but in a secondary situation and as such she is the one most vulnerable for attack. Remember that not Adam but Eve was tempted originally and even today missionary family attacks are often orchestrated by the evil one through the wife. Many missionary failures result from the fact that the husband has neglected to build a strong wall of care and protection around his wife.

3. Do not "go it alone"

We do not recommend going on your own. The Bible talks about "called ones" and "sent ones" which speak of a home support group that you belong to and that will vouch for you physically and before the throne of grace, Acts. 13:1. You need a prayer group. You need a financial set up to process your funds. You need home contacts. You need a political link for documents. You do have responsibilities to close relatives and others. Besides a vision you need a goal and a plan. You need to be held accountable. Scripturally you need to have someone over you. You must respect, i.e. relate to your elders. Who are they and how do you relate to them?

VII. GO

So you are now ready. You know where you will go and what you want to do. Listed here are 5 variations of missionary service. Some can be repeated, some serve well as preliminary ministries before making the final jump of a lifetime ministry. It is easier to begin small and add more later. Stay humble, begin small and let God enlarge your ministry. You can avoid becoming a casualty.

A. Suggested initial time frame

One to two years

If this is your first time to serve abroad give yourself a reasonable time. A one-year time frame is the minimum for God to test you and bring you through all 4 seasons and the separations of holidays, birthdays and similar events. A long-term commitment can lead you into a bind that spells CASUALTY because of the many unknown, unproved un-encountered situations that you will have to face and for which you simply had no frame of reference.



B. Church group sponsored projects

There are now many church group short-term projects. A number of mission organizations now even sponsor short-term activities. They can be splendid to accomplish a specified expert job requirement. The benefit especially for young singles is the group support it provides. The possibilities to make valuable long-lasting spiritual contributions to the nationals are very limited. Even if it looks like a huge love affair the brevity of the event and lack of language seriously minimize any long-term results. There are great benefits but mostly they are for the group ministering rather than the people ministered to.

C. Short term ministry

Every prospective missionary should visit a field for 3 months to live and work in that culture to see if a long time ministry would be compatible to him/her. There are many effective short-term ministries available, especially for those with specific areas of expertise. The longer the short-term ministry can be, usually the more successful. Because the time element is short and limited there are usually a number of unique problems and friction points surrounding this type of ministry.

D. Home ministries

An abundance of home ministries exists. The benefits are that one can usually minister in his own language. There may be many subculture differences but usually there is a relationship between the main culture that can bridge these gaps. This provides excellent opportunities for those who may not be able to go abroad for various reasons like health, entanglements, lack of finances, age and many more. It is also a great way to spend a few years in preparation for going abroad.

E. Long term service

By long term most organizations think of 5 years or more. This is too long to hold onto your pets, your hobby equipment, your apartment or your job. When you come back not only will life have changed, but also people will have changed.

A five-year time slot includes the future. Within 5 years so many unknowns lie before us that it takes a total commitment to the ministry itself. This is beyond a temporary church project or a short-term commitment to fill a specific need. This requires a calling! This requires language study and other preparation about which we have already talked. It means a commitment into the dark, a commitment to the unknown, a commitment to the future and therefore it requires a definite commitment to God that you will see it through and, what is more, that you will see it through for 5 years joyfully and successfully.

F. A life time calling

In many ways this might be an easier choice than making a 5-year commitment. Usually a calling came first, and many times the major decision was made a long time ago and included specific training. With a 5 year commitment there is still "home" and the idea of "returning" in some distant future. With a life time calling

there is usually a very simple desire to drop everything that is holding us down and a longing to just do this one thing, which is to follow God to the country of His choice like Abraham & Sarah did. We recommend a lifetime commitment. There is a great need for those with the simple vision of making a go of things through thick or thin. There is a need for those who will never look back. There is a great need for those who don't count the cost. A 75 year old grandma decided to finally obey her calling. She went to the Philippines and started an orphanage. Ten years later she was still successfully at it with a nationwide influence and respect of the highest level of government officials in the country. She just went and did it. I can just hear God say, "That is my kind of a woman."

CONCLUSION

Here are 7 steps that help a mature adult couple to be ready for service as missionaries and become successful at it. We hope you can avoid the pitfalls of the 80%. You aspire to a high calling and the black-one is lying in wait to trip you up and make you a casualty. By the grace of God don't let it happen to you. Prepare well and avoid becoming a casualty.

The preparation time described here is roughly from one to two years. One year being about the shortest mental, emotional and spiritual as well as physical time needed to prepare. It requires a total 180-degree turnabout in vision, priorities, job skills and lifestyle. It means taking care of relatives, releasing bonds with friends and separating oneself from loved ones in a permanent inner fashion. It means willingness to train and prepare oneself spiritually to be able to accomplish a quality task for the Master. Funds and other supplies need to be gathered or secured for a long-term ministry. Practice at home should be included so that some experience is gained before disappearing into the vast unknown. The end of all this preparation should be marked by a deep inner conviction and peace. A quiet inward and outward stability should mark the climax of this preparation time. At this time the personal call or conviction should find a very clear echo among the spiritually minded home group, the elders of the church and the sending agency.

People should be "sent." Their holy feet should be beautiful upon the mountains (difficulties) as they preach the gospel of Good News to those that are lost.

Lord, here I go! I can do no otherwise. I am compelled by Your Spirit. I go bound in Your Spirit not knowing what will happen to me. I know that hardships and difficulties are facing me. However I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me — the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace and finishing my course with joy.

Amen, so be it. Lord Jesus. Come quickly. I love you and adore you. Amen and amen for always and always.

Blessings to you, our dear friends!

We are happy to present the video, audio and paper materials that have been prepared by **New Life for Churches**. You have the privilege *upon completion of your practical assignment* to use this lecture with others.

Practical assignment

Completed

- Share a message on adult preparation for missions with your coaches and preacher boys. Then preach such a message in your home church. ☐

- Write a brief report on your message: ☐

Date:

Place:

Audience (age, number)

What was your main goal in your message?

Did you see any response to that?