

INTRODUCTION TO MISSIONS

by

Milton Martin

EVERY CHRISTIAN COMMANDED TO KNOW GOD'S WILL

Eph. 5:17; I Cor. 2:9; John 10:10

The world is filled with people who have made wrong choices in life. Consequently there are literally millions of frustrated Christians with empty lives, unfulfilled, without purpose, without meaning. So many are, as a result, in a wrong marriage, working the wrong job, living in the wrong house, driving the wrong car and are involved with the wrong friends.

Every believer can know the very reason for their own creation and being.

I. Everything Created Has A Place And Purpose.

Everything God makes and all He does reveals God. He is a God of order and reason.

A. His creation.

1. The universe - each star and planet is in its place.
2. No two snowflakes alike.

B. Examples from daily life.

1. Lady makes a dress - uses a pattern.
2. Cook bakes a cake - follows a recipe.
3. Man builds a house - uses a blueprint.
4. Person pursues a degree - studies a planned program of education.
5. One takes a trip - consults and follows a road map.

II. The Scriptures Teach That God Is Interested In The Smallest Details Of Our Lives.

1. God knows the number of the hairs in our head, Matt. 10:30.
2. God knows our every sorrow, Ex. 3:7.
3. God takes note of our every downsitting and uprising, Ps. 139:2
4. God catches every tear of the believer and records them in a book., Ps. 56:8
5. God is writing a book of remembrance about every believer, Mal. 3:16.
6. God knows our thoughts, ways and words, Ps. 139:1-6.

III. Why Is It Important To Know God's Will?

- A. We are incapable of planning our own lives, Jer. 10:23.
- B. Only God knows the future, Is. 46:9,10.
- C. The will of God brings eternal duration to our lives and what we do, I John 2:17.
- D. God's will is "tailor made" just for you and no one else, Prov. 3:6; Rom. 8:28; Ps. 37:23
- E. God's plan is wonderfully detailed and includes everything needed to fulfill or complete it, Ps. 32:8; 73:24
 1. Instruction - Enlightening of intelligence - "I will".
 2. Teach - Point out a definite, specific course - "I will".
 3. Guide - All the advice, counsel, revelation needed. - "I will".
- F. Additional benefits and blessings.

1. Profitable and successful promises, Josh. 1:8; Ps. 1:2-3.
2. Light on our path, John 8:12.
3. Joy in our labors, Acts 20:24.
4. Peace in every circumstance, Is. 26:3.
5. Satisfaction not found elsewhere, Ps. 63:5,8.

IV. God's Will For Believers Only, Ps. 25:12.

- A. God wants all to come to Christ, I Tim. 2:4.
- B. It is not God's will for men to perish, II Pet. 3:9.

DISCERNING GOD'S WILL

Rom. 12:1,2; Jerm. 29:11

Introduction:

1. It is good.
2. It is acceptable - to us and for us.
3. It is for our welfare.
4. It is perfect for us.

I. Surrender.

Given up completely, unconditionally, absolutely, totally, no strings attached. No will of own.

II. Separation.

From world. World cannot mold such a one - cannot make to conform to it. Thoughts, habits, philosophies, recreation, dress, etc. - refuse to allow the world to dictate, dominate, permeate, control, etc., I John 2:17; James 1:4.

III. Spiritual Mindedness, Rom. 12:2.

Mind on the Lord - occupied with things of the Lord. Psychologists say we are what we think, Col. 3:1-3; Prov. 23:7.

IV. God's Will Will Be Made Known Through His Word, Ps. 119:105.

God's will is always in harmony with God's Word.

V. God's Will Will Be Made Known Through Prayer, Ps. 86:11; Matt. 7:7,8; Acts 9:6.

VI. Counsel With Mature Christians, Prov. 19:20; 15:22; 27:9.

VII. Providential Circumstances May Play A Part In Indicating God's Will, I Cor. 16:9; II Cor. 2:12; Acts 16:6-10.

SEVEN HELPS TOWARD FINDING GOD'S WILL

- I. Be Absolutely Sincere With God.**
- II. Desire Only The Glory Of God.**
(Put self interest aside).
- III. Accept God's Refusals Without Restraint.**
(Accept NO for an answer - without murmuring).
- IV. Be Willing To Admit It When You Miss The Will Of God, Recognize It, Confess It, And Turn In The Right Direction.**
- V. Remember, In Seeking The Perfect Will Of God, That He Only Leads In One Direction And One Step At A Time - Never In Conflict With Biblical Principles.**
- VI. Be Willing To Wait. God's STOPS Are As Important As His GO'S.**
- VII. Seek God's Confirmation, Rom. 14:23.**
(Peace will accompany God's will, Phil. 4:7; John 14:27).

MISSIONS THE NEW TESTAMENT WAY

THE FIRST MISSIONARIES

1. They were tested and proven servants of the Church.
Acts 13:1-3; (Paul submitted to the Church - Acts 9:15; 22:14, 15, 21; 26:16-18).
2. The Church, guided by the Holy Spirit, set them apart for a “work”. Acts 13:2 It was not a geographical call. (Special service beyond the home Church).
3. The Church officially recognized the call and commissioned Barnabas and Saul. Acts 13:3
4. The Church was in prayer when the Holy Spirit spoke and in prayer when they authorized the missionaries to go out. Acts 13:2,3
5. They were sent to preach the Word of God and to make disciples. Acts 13:5.
6. They were reportable to the sending Church (gathered the Church and rehearsed all).
Acts 14:27
7. They spent their furlough with that Church (abode long time with the disciples). Acts 14:28
8. They spent their furlough with the Church at Antioch (teaching and preaching). Acts 15:35
9. They helped Churches see the spiritual needs of others (declaring the conversion of the Gentiles). Acts 15:3
10. They were sent out again by the Church in Antioch (recommended by the brethren). Acts 15:40
11. All national leadership came from the local congregation. Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5

GOD'S COMMUNICATOR

The Missionary call is the greatest on the earth. Isaiah 42:6-7; 55:5

The missionary calling has unique features. The missionary must be reasonably well-educated, cross geographical boundaries, leave loved ones behind, sacrifice financially, adjust to another language and culture, and possibly work on a closely-knit team. "Change" must not be a dreaded word. We must open ourselves to "criticism, reflection, and heart-searching. We must consider diligently the qualifications and methods of missionaries.

Dr. Saeed Khan Kurdistan, Iranian Christian who died in 1942—someone visited his area in 1960. An aged man of the community was asked by the visitor if he had known Dr. Saeed. The elderly man caught his breath and whispered: "Dr. Saeed was Christ himself!" Reverently, it can be said that this is our goal.

I. Finances.

Two Extremes—Some feel it is imperative to "go native" and to denounce all who do not meet their standard. Others feel strongly that they must live on a Western standard for the sake of their family's health and well being. They defend their position by saying that the nationals will understand.

Many times there is conflict between the living standard of the western missionary and the national. Chacek Chun, a Korean missionary in Pakistan, comments, "I think it is significant that today's image of the Christian missionary endeavor from the Asian receptor's point of view is an image of comfort and privilege. Hence, Asians tend to reject the missionary and misunderstand his message."

In danger of being controversial, misunderstood, open to criticism, and making you angry, permit me to leave you something for thought.

1. It does matter what nationals think about the financial profile of the missionary community. Generally, they are appalled by the gap between the living standard of themselves and the western missionary. If we turn away from this concern with indifference, we are in danger of being insensitive to Paul's clear teaching about being a stumbling block to others.
2. Singles and couples without children can more easily make the adjustment to a simple life style. This should be encouraged but not legislated.
3. Experimentation should be allowed. One couple with a newborn infant is living in a bamboo hut with a mud floor in a Muslim rural village. They should be supported, but at the same time, not made to feel embarrassment when at any time they feel withdrawal advisable.
4. Each family should be open before the Lord on this subject. They should prayerfully evaluate their own physical and emotional needs. The goal is to live as closely as possible to the style of life of their target people without adverse results to anyone in the family. Balance is a key word.
5. Often the missionary can reside in stark simplicity in a rural area and then take an occasional trip to a nearby city for a change, for relaxation and necessary shopping.

We must be realistic concerning our needs and various levels of capacity to endure deprivation within foreign culture.

6. There are dangers and extremes. Idle criticism, a judgmental attitude, and self-righteousness must be studiously avoided. Often missionaries living in extreme poverty or those living in great affluence are the most opinionated and self-defensive.

II. Housing.

The day of the “mission compound” is by no means over. They are still found throughout the developing world. They are often misunderstood and, in some cases, despised by the nationals. A convert questioned their existence by asking, “Am I wrong if I say that mission bungalows are often a partition wall between the hearts of the people and the missionaries?”

It is necessary to relate to the group with whom one is working. The missionary needs to move into the community to share his incarnational testimony among the people. The national Christians must scatter out among their non-Christian townspeople rather than live in a sealed-off community.

Light must be diffused to be of any benefit. Matt. 5:14-16 The main concern is to relate to the group with whom one is working. Student work in a university area would demand facilities quite different from a rural village setting.

III. Intellectual Life.

Missionary work has undergone a radical transformation since the end of the colonial era. New approaches and attitudes have been demanded. Pioneers have popularized the science of missiology. Hundreds of case studies and textbooks are now on the market that can be utilized as resource material.

One relevant bit of advise to missionaries is that they should “keep an open mind, realizing that times change and one must make adjustments. Tactics of ten years ago will not work and even those of five years ago are outdated.”

It is always sad to see missionaries become rutted and inflexible. Their orientation and allegiance to traditional methodology makes it seem to them to be almost a denial of truth to move carefully into new areas of sensitive experimentation.

Our commitment to Jesus Christ means that we want to be the best servant possible for His glory. It means stretching, not only in spirit, but also in intellect. True academic excellence leads to greater effectiveness, not to pride or snobbery. We must beware of vegetating on the mission field. Both our hearts and our minds must stay alive and alert.

IV. Attitudes.

“Students, the single most important area of your life and ministry will be in the realm of attitudes. It is here you will either succeed or fail as a missionary. Attitudes touch every

nerve end of life. Your relationship to Christ, fellow missionary, national believer and non-Christian will be deeply affected by proper or improper attitudes.” Harold Cook - Moody Bible Institute.

There is an old adage that contains a great deal of truth. “The gift without the giver is bare.” Phil Parshall - Bangladesh. Missionaries are giving people. But the act of giving is inadequate in itself. What is the force behind the action? Is there love? Is there a deep concern for the other person? Has giving become a professional obligation? Have the poor or the heathen become a product to sell?

V. Ministry.

It is time now to consider the ministerial focus of the missionary. When we turn to New Testament missions, we find that Paul’s involvement was exceedingly temporary. He came, stayed a few weeks or months, or at most a few years, and left to go into new areas. The churches he planted did not remain in his control. Even if an heretical influence came into the churches, Paul could only exhort the Christians to walk in truth. He had no funds to cut off. The believers were totally free. Certainly the contemporary picture of missions is different from Paul’s day. Paul didn’t do what modern missionaries have done. “He does not build a bungalow. - Leslie Newbegin. Paul could have rightfully said, “Here is enough work for me to do. This is where I am.” - George Peters. Paul resisted the temptation and kept on the move. Roland Allen points out that Paul didn’t neglect the churches. He continued to visit and correspond with them. But the basic leadership responsibility was all put in local hands.

Now western missionaries have a very difficult time completely turning over control to the younger churches. Missionaries have been content to be resident in one mission station working among a small cluster of churches for a full missionary career of thirty-five years.

The missionary must move on as soon as possible after worshiping groups have been established. Converts must not transfer their dependence on to the missionary and away from the Lord.

“Having travailed, given birth, and cared for young churches the missionaries (whether Tamilian or Naga or American or Australian) should turn over authority to indigenous leaders. Travail must not go on too long. It must be followed by weaning and pushing out of the nest. Then the missionary goes on and repeats the process.” Roland Allen.

VI. Conclusion.

Ship pictures and paintings are beautiful; ships in harbor are interesting to visit but this is not really what ships are all about. An inscription once on a picture said, “A ship in a harbor is safe, but that is not what ships are built for.”

The front line of a battle is risky but no victory has ever been won by those who longer far behind the enemy gunfire. Our task calls for reflection, decision and engagement.

HOW DOES ONE RECEIVE A CALL TO CHRISTIAN SERVICE?

God is sovereign in His choice of the servants who will serve Him. God usually does not call the lazy and unoccupied. There must be on our part an attitude of receptivity and readiness so that when the call comes we will be in a position to hear and answer. The chances of our getting a call will be greatly enhanced if we meet certain conditions.

I. An Open Mind.

- A. Every Christian must be absolutely honest in his dealings if he is to keep his options open and allow the Holy Spirit to take full control of his mental faculties.
- B. It is a never-ending battle and is by no means easy. II Cor. 10:5
- C. Everybody prides himself on having an open mind but few actually achieve it.
 - 1. Man's capacity for self-deception is enormous. Jerm. 17:9
 - 2. We think we have an open mind while all along we are victims of our prejudices and pre-conceived opinions.
 - 3. We have long ago decided that there are certain things we will not do.
 - a. In our minds we have decided, "Anywhere but the foreign field," or perhaps "Anything but preach."
 - 4. As long as we harbor preconceived, negative notions about the will of God, we shall not recognize the call of God.

II. An Attentive Ear.

- A. We must have our ear open to the voice of the Holy Spirit.
 - 1. It is not enough to rid one's mind of all "deceptive fantasies."
 - 2. We must become sensitive to the slightest whisper of the Holy Spirit when He speaks.
- B. Our hearing faculty can be turned on or off at will.
 - 1. It does not take much practice to sharpen one's sense of hearing provided there is sufficient motivation.
 - 2. Example: The difference in the hearing of a father and mother regarding an infant. The maternal instinct in a mother can sharpen her sense of hearing to the point where the slightest cry from her little one will bring her out of bed. She may sleep with "one ear open" while her husband sleeps with both ears closed.
- C. Some Christians complain that God never speaks to them.
 - 1. It may be that God did speak, not once but many times, but they were not listening.
 - 2. Effective communication is possible only when the speaker and the listener are in direct contact.

III. A Pure Heart.

- A. God reveals His truth not to those who want to know it but to those who are prepared to do it. John 7:17
 - 1. God does not reveal truth just to satisfy someone's intellectual curiosity.

2. Understanding God's truth is not just an intellectual exercise but has moral dimensions as well.
- B. "Nature reveals her secrets only to those who obey her laws." Hall of Science, World's Fair - Chicago 1933-34.
 1. God reveals His truths only to those who obey His laws.
 - a. One of God's laws or truths is that He is holy. Ps. 99:5
 - b. All who wish to have fellowship with Him must likewise be holy. Heb. 12:14; Ps. 24:3,4
 - c. The person with unconfessed sin in his life will wait in vain for any call from the Lord, other than the call to repent. Is. 55:7
 - d. Only the pure in heart shall see God. Matt. 5:8

IV. Busy Hands.

- A. God calls those who are busy - not idlers.
 1. Simon and Andrew were fishing. Matt. 4:18-22
 2. Likewise James and John were fishing. Mark 1:19,20
 3. Levi was working as a tax-collector. Luke 5:27,28
 4. Paul was busy persecuting Christians. Acts 8:3; 9:1-3
 5. David was taking care of his father's sheep. I Sam. 16:11-13
 6. Elisha was plowing a field. I Kings 19:19
- B. "An idle mind is the Devil's workshop."
 1. Men have fallen into sin when they should have been busy. II Sam. 11:1-4
 2. Other consequences of idleness.
 - a. Poverty. Prov. 20:13
 - b. Want. Prov. 20:4
 - c. Hunger. Prov. 19:15
 - d. Bondage. Prov. 12:24
 - e. Prov. 24:30-34.
- C. Christ set an example in work. John 5:17; 9:4

V. Ready Feet.

- A. There are at least two possible temptations related to decision regarding God's will for one's life.
 1. One is to run before the Lord.
 2. The other is to lag behind and do nothing but talk. (For every one that does the first, there are ten who commit the second.)
 - a. Many cannot bring themselves to make a major decision regarding full-time Christian service.
 - b. They examine all the aspects; they pray about the matter and enlist others to pray; they discuss it with others; they do everything but come to a conclusion.
- B. Many do not understand the true nature of divine guidance. (It is always easier to steer a moving vehicle than a stationary one.)
 1. It is necessary to step out in faith. II Cor. 5:7
 2. One must be willing to act on the guidance God has given and expect Him to be responsible for all the consequences that come from his obedience.

- C. The time is short (I Cor. 7:29) and the King's business requires haste (I Sam. 21:8).
- D. Note the testimony of the Psalmist. Ps. 119:32
- E. Meditate on Isaiah 52:7 and Rom. 10:15.
- F. Decide to act and get going. (Commit your way to the Lord and allow Him to block the way when it is not His will.) Acts 16:10
(Some would-be missionaries give the impression that they are waiting for God to pack their trunks, buy their tickets, and see them off at the airport.)

DEVELOPING A STRATEGY

1. What people does God want us to reach?
2. What is this people like?
3. Who should reach them?
4. How should they be reached?
5. What will be the result of reaching them?

OBSTACLES TO MISSIONARY SERVICE

There are many pitfalls between the decision to be a missionary and arrival on a foreign field of service. It is estimated that out of every fifty persons who dedicate their lives for missionary work only one actually gets to the field. Thus it is safe to say that only a fraction of those who declare their willingness to go to the mission field ever get there.

There may be many reasons behind these facts. Many persons register a decision in their teens before they realize what it is all about. Such a decision may not have been of the Lord to begin with. Others make the decision in good faith only to find it fade with the passing of time. Still others drift along with the crowd and eventually end up in secular work. And still others get into Christian work at home. There are undoubtedly other reasons not mentioned. The reasons can be many. We shall attempt to discuss some of the more common obstacles.

1. **Love and Marriage.**

Only the Lord knows exactly how many people have fallen by the way on this account. A significant number recognize God's call on their lives as teens but fail to determine they will only consider as a marriage partner one who has also been called to foreign service. Consequently they may fall in love with a good Christian but one who has no call to full-time Christian work and certainly no intention of going to the mission field.

Occasionally a missionary-minded young person will win the other to his or her point of view and burden and together they prepare for missionary service. But that is the exception and not the rule. Oftener than not the missionary-minded one gradually loses his missionary vision and is lost to the mission field.

2. **Accumulation of Debts.**

"Buy now and pay later" is the foundation stone of the American free enterprise system. With every passing year it becomes easier and easier to go into debt. Most American Christians have followed the "flow" or the trend. Consequently, when God calls they cannot respond - because it would take them years just to get out of debt.

The cost of higher education has risen so much that the majority of college students have been obligated to borrow money to put themselves through school. This kind of arrangement is fine for the average student who upon graduation with a college degree can secure a good salary and repay his loan in three or four years. But what about the prospective missionary who majors in Bible or missions? When he graduates he goes into Christian service where the salary scale is and it may take him five or six years to liquidate his loan. By that time he may have settled down in the pastorate and decided to stay.

3. **Parental Opposition.**

This is a greater obstacle than most people think. There are two kinds of opposition. One kind comes from non-Christian parents who have no use for the things of the Lord, much less missions. The other comes from Christian parents who believe in missions but are unhappy when their children become involved.

In the case of non-Christian parents, sometimes the opposition becomes very ugly. Some young people have been locked out of their homes for no other offence than announcing their intention to become missionaries. Some have been completely disowned by their families. Others have had their names removed from their parents will.

The opposition that comes from Christian parents is more silent and more subtle but none the less damaging. Such parents are in favor of missions and may give generously but become less than happy when their own son or daughter decides to become a missionary. That brings the matter too close to home. Missions is all right for someone else's son or daughter but not for theirs. They have grandiose plans for their children and these do not include the mission field. The father may want his son to succeed him in the business, which may have been in the family for several generations. The pressure generated by this kind of situation is sometimes harder to resist than the out right opposition of non-Christian parents.

4. **Lack of Direction.**

Modern youth is restless, agitated, uncertain, confused and frightened. Human problems are so enormous that they defy solution. Personal options are so numerous that they cause confusion. Adults have made such a mess of the world that the youth have little confidence in adults or the future. They have suffered much from the failure of their parents in failed marriages and bad decisions. Today's young people are caught between the problems and the options and hardly know how to relate the one to the other.

All have been influenced in some way by humanism and our present culture of "immediate gratification." With that contamination plus a dabbling in psychology, anthropology, and sociology. Today's Christian students tend to lean to their own understanding (Prov. 3:5) rather than look to the Lord for His direction and guidance.

There is also the problem of understanding what Christian missions is all about. There are many fine Christians today who have a passing interest in missions and would like to participate but do not have sufficient information to enable them to make an intelligent decision one way or another. Their knowledge of missions is derived from missionary speakers whose messages tend to center around their own local work. Seldom do they hear a message that deals with the major issues of missions on anything like a global scale. Consequently their knowledge of missions is fragmentary and superficial.

There is no substitute for knowledge. Ignorance is no excuse before the Lord. The best form of inspiration is information. Churches, Christian schools and Christian colleges have no reason to exist if they are not producing laborers for the fields of the world. Missions is the very reason for their existence. If missions is not their heartbeat, selfish and self-centered Christians will be the result.

5. **Attractive Offers at Home.**

Too often today American Christians feel they have certain inalienable rights. These include a good house, a late model automobile, health care insurance, retirement benefits, guaranteed leisure time and a good salary. It used to be that it took 25 or 30 years dedication to one job before a couple could achieve the above. Most all feel now when they graduate from Bible School or Seminary, or when they get married, they have those

rights. This is known as the American dream - but what is not faced or recognized is that both spouses will have to work and probably at the loss of themselves and their children to the world. It is not worth it!

Some missionary candidates have ended up in the pastorate at home because of the pressure brought to bear on them by well-meaning but short-sighted churches. They find themselves in positions of success and good salaries and convince themselves it is best to remain at home. The longer a possible missionary remains in Christian work at home and the more successful he is, the greater is the temptation to remain in this country.

6. **Lack of Practical Experience.**

There is a growing recognition on the part of educators and missionary senders of the importance of in-service training. Ideally, serving in some capacity on a church staff while studying is advisable. The theories learned in the classroom should be tested in the laboratory of experience. In this way a student gains valuable experience while learning. In fact, learning by doing is now an accepted principle in the theory of teaching.

Sadly many have never served full-time in Christian service until they reach that status and point of doing missionary deputation. Due to the fact they have never worked under a Christian leader, there are skills, disciplines and habits not properly developed. It is easy to become lazy and undisciplined - especially on deputation.

Many go to the field to plant churches and yet cannot intelligently articulate and convey to others just exactly the steps they will use to plant a church. Most have never been in on the beginning or the growing of a new church - and thus are destined to making more than their share of mistakes. In fact, many do not know what a church is. How can someone plant and grow a church if they cannot define properly a church and are unable to be specific on how to grow a church.

7. **Failure to be in the Right Church.**

The Great Commission was given by the Lord to the first Church. Matt. 28:18-20.

The first missionaries were called out from a church. Acts 13:1-3.

The first missionaries were accountable to the church at Antioch and returned to that church and reported to that church. Acts 14:26,27.

The first missionaries spent their furlough with their church and were ministered to by their church. Acts 14:28.

A church exists for the cause of missions. Most Christians today are more concerned with all the programs that a church has to offer for every member of the family rather than whether their church can equip and prepare them for ministry. The church does not exist solely to preach to its people, sing to them, visit with them, pray for them or entertain them. The church is in the world to prepare and enable every member to have a ministry and minister effectively. The mission field is the world outside the walls of a church.

The church is to provide an atmosphere in it so the Holy Spirit can separate certain ones for work outside their geographical area, cultural boundaries, and language. Sad to say many churches are not in such a spiritual condition that they continually present the world and all its need to their people. People are basically selfish and self-centered. This will carry over into the life of a church if missions - praying, giving and going are not kept continually and always before the people. Consequently many Christians do not hear the call to missions because they are not in the right church.

8. **Lack of Proper Education and Bible Training.**

Doctors spend eight to ten years training to treat the human body and its ailments. Lawyers spend seven to eight years in preparation to interpret and practice law. Most engineers spend at least five years in study so as to be able to properly execute their profession.

The most important work in the world is that of ministering to the spiritual needs (eternal things) of the souls of people. How can we be so ignorant, presumptuous, and naïve as to think that we have the right and are capable of meeting those unique and particular needs of human beings with little or no preparation! If men spend so much time in preparation just to deal with man's temporal need, how much more should we not be willing to spend at least that much time to prepare properly to meet spiritual needs!

Apart from Bible training, missionaries need specialized training. There are some subjects that are absolute "musts" if missionaries are not to suffer on the foreign field and have success. No less than excellence should be the rule - not just skimping by or mediocrity. The language must be learned - and one must never stop learning. Cross-cultural Communication techniques must be mastered. Research into anthropology and the importance of folk-lore and legends must not be overlooked in other languages and cultures.

Some seem to think that God put a premium on ignorance. Too many today are proud of their ignorance and remain proudly so. However, when mistakes are made or something happens that they know nothing about they plead ignorance. Yet God does not excuse ignorance. If He did, then those who have never heard would have a legitimate excuse. We are inexcusable before God when we try to plead - "I did not know that this need existed or that those people live!"

God always deserves the very best. May we give Him nothing less! II Sam. 24:14; Eph. 6:5,6; Col. 3:22,23.

SOME QUALIFICATIONS FOR MISSIONARY SERVICE

There was a time when the missionary was regarded as a hero. It was assumed that he was an intellectual and spiritual giant, more dedicated, more courageous, and more spiritual than the workers who stayed at home.

Today the missionary, in many churches and by many Christians, is just tolerated. Many of those under age forty at home secretly feel the missionary is someone who is a “dreamer” and one who is throwing his life away. They actually think the missionary is ‘fighting a losing battle.’” A stereo-typed image has formed in their minds that a missionary is just some kind of a mis-fit who could not make it at home. And besides, the needs at home of evangelism and church planting should be taken care of first.

On the other hand, missionary Stephen Neill wrote”

“I may place on record my conviction that the needs of the mission field are always far greater than the needs of the church at home, that no human qualifications, however high, render a man or woman more than adequate for missionary work, that there is no career which affords such scope for enterprise and creative work, and that in comparison with the slight sacrifice demanded, the reward is great beyond all measuring.”

Building of the Indian Church

David Livingston said, “Why stoop to be a king or ambassador when you can be a missionary!”

The mission field deserves the very best of the churches at home. The missionary is a pioneer and sets in process that which may determine everything related to the future churches of a particular movement or doctrine in a country. Upon one missionary may rest whether there will be a church or two or whether there may be hundreds of his movement in that country. The future of entire nations is at stake. Not just any kind of a missionary will do.

The perfect missionary has not yet appeared on the scene, and it would be foolish to insist on standards bordering on perfection or unrealistic. On the other hand, it is a grave mistake to imply that special training, quality preparation and spiritual qualifications are not necessary. The mission field may not need geniuses, but it does not need dunces either.

The following qualifications mentioned do not cover all possible needs but should serve at least as a possible outline to be considered.

I. Spiritual Qualifications.

If the missionary is not in every sense of the word a “man of God” he might as well remain at home. “It cannot be too positively asserted that missionary work is a spiritual enterprise, undertaken for spiritual results to be achieved only by spiritual means. It follows, therefore, that the essential qualifications are spiritual.”

Rowland Hogben In Training

1. **Genuine conversion experience.**

It should not be necessary to elaborate on this point. One cannot possibly understand the role of a missionary if they have never been saved. Such a person will only see the physical needs of a pagan people - and not their real need, Christ and Salvation. The missionary who is not sure of his own salvation also is not likely to lead others to a saving knowledge of Christ.
2. **Assurance of divine guidance.**

Missionary work is not getting any easier, some of the physical hardships may have been eliminated, but in their place is a whole host of other difficulties; psychological, ideological, and interpersonal. If the missionary has a deep, abiding conviction that he is where he is by the will of God, he will not turn and run at the first sign of danger nor will he give up when the difficulties multiply and the frustrations almost drive him crazy. He will go the second mile and stay on the job long after the sun has gone down only if he is sure that he is in the will of God. It will help immensely if he knows, "'I am a missionary by the will of God.'"
3. **Strong devotional life.**

The devotional life of the missionary is all-important. He will be a man of God only if his spiritual life is systematically developed by daily Bible study, prayer, meditation, and worship.

Here at home, especially in Bible School, the student is buoyed up and may go from one spiritual "high" to another by chapel services, prayer meetings, his church, and fellowship with other Christians. On the mission field these props will probably be missing. The missionary finds himself on his own and comes under very special spiritual attack. He must know how to cultivate his own spiritual life without outside help. He must, like a tree in an alien environment puts down its taproots very deep to find moisture and nourishment, have roots that go down deep. Otherwise his spiritual life will wither and die.
4. **Self-discipline.**

Discipline is essential to the ongoing of human society. Without it community life will disintegrate. There are two kinds of discipline. One is imposed from without; the other is cultivated from within. Most people have to rely on the first because they possess so little of the second. This is why so much is said about "law and order." Apparently, for most, it is impossible to achieve the one without the other.

The missionary is dependent on self-discipline more than anyone else. Even the pastor at home is in a different situation. The pastor is constantly before his people and is under the surveillance of his church. He may be called to give an account of himself by his church or perhaps deacons.

What about the missionary? Who actually is checking up on him? He may not see visitors from home even once a year. If he loafes on the job or becomes lazy in body or mind he can easily get away with it.

Deputation stateside can ruin some missionaries. It is too easy to give oneself strictly to travel and visiting two or three churches each week. It is easy to begin to be lax in certain "disciplines" - getting up late because of late hours the night before, excusing and justifying laziness and lack of study because of living out of a suitcase, etc.

Self-discipline is listed by Paul as one of the fruits of the Spirit in Galatians 5:23, where it is called “self-control.” Paul himself could never let down. I Cor. 9:25-27. He was able therefore as a result to exhort others. II Tim. 2:3.

5. **A heart of love.**

The Lord Jesus Christ, the first Missionary and Model Missionary, came into the world to express the love of the Father. John 3:16. The missionary goes into the world to express the love of Christ. II Cor. 5:14; John 17:26; 15:9; I John 4:7-12. Paul and the other Apostles were so controlled by the love of Christ (II Cor. 5:14) that they were willing to risk their lives for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ. Acts 15:26. Love is the outstanding trait of the Christian life (John 13:34,35) and the number one qualification of Christian service. I Cor. 13:1-3.

Missionaries do not have to have all the brains or brawn (bright or brave) to be successful but they must be loving. The nationals will overlook many weaknesses and forgive many blunders if they are persuaded that the missionary has a heart of love.

6. **Knowledge of the Scriptures.**

The missionary’s chief task is to share Jesus Christ with the non-Christian world. The missionary must have a working knowledge of the Scriptures, which are able to make men wise unto salvation. II Tim. 3:15. The Bible must be the foundation on which the missionary builds his life and his work. No amount of worldly wisdom can substitute for a knowledge of the Scriptures. He is expected to be an authority on his specialty subject and better have some answers. I Peter 3:15; Ps. 119:46; Matt. 10:18.

The missionary must never stop studying and learning. II Tim. 2:15. It is a very serious and awesome responsibility to handle the Word of God before people.

The responsibility is to not only give the true meaning, but also the true application to the various times and classes of people.

7. **Experience and success in Christian service.**

The first missionaries, Barnabas and Saul, were proven in the church at Antioch. Acts 13:1-3. Has a person won souls and had success in his own culture and own language? If it cannot be done at home, it will not be done in a foreign culture and foreign language. There should be some evidence of God’s blessing in a person’s life and some proof of the power of the Holy Spirit in his ministry before going over seas.

II. **Personality Traits And Psychological Qualifications.**

Personality traits and psychological qualifications are more important perhaps in the service of the Lord than in any other field.

“A bookkeeper doesn’t have to worry about the impression he makes on anybody but the boss. The main thing is to have his records neat and accurate. That’s not true of the salesperson, however. The volume of his sales and the commission he gets may depend on such impressions. A research scientist may be a very disagreeable person to meet, at the same time he is highly regarded for his contribution to science. But a minister of the Gospel can’t even get a hearing for his message if he continually rubs people the wrong way.”

Harold Cook,

An Introduction To The Study Of Christian Missions

Interpersonal relations are more important for those on the mission field because undesirable results can be much more far-reaching. People that are obnoxious and abrasive can be responsible for closing entire areas of a country to the Gospel and even cause governments to cancel existing visas and also cause them not to extend new visas. Other missionary's work is directly affected when they are thrown together inadvertently and have to work long hours by the side of a bitter, complaining "cockle-burr" who has basic psychological problems.

A. Ability to endure hardness.

The affluent society of 20th century America has produced in all of us a love of ease and comfort. Physical well-being, financial security, material prosperity, peace and contentment, plus law and order are all considered "musts" today. The individual is pampered and protected from the cradle to the grave. Dentistry, surgery and childbirth have been rendered painless. Even Band-Aids must be "ouch-less."

Most American missionaries find it very difficult to adjust to a simple life-style like that found in many countries. Many pastors and church members feel sorry for the missionary and may insist that they not subject their family to living on a level of the people in some third-world countries. It seems that once we have reached a higher rung on the ladder (social level and standard of living), seldom than are we willing to go down a rung or two. It used to be that missionaries took 20 barrels to the field but now it is more like ten tons - household furniture and appliances, including canned goods.

The US government's Peace Corps volunteers put most missionaries to shame. They live at the level of the people they serve. They are not allowed to own jeeps, cars, or even bicycles. They use public transportation - second class where available.

The Christian missionary must be prepared to endure hardness, like good soldiers of Jesus Christ, in order to identify with the people they are seeking to win. The missionary must be willing to "eat bitterness." This is an old Chinese term for enduring hardness - "eating bitterness."

B. Patience and perseverance.

The west is ridiculously fast. The East is agonizingly slow. The missionary is not going to change the world overnight.

One of the most difficult adjustments for the missionary is to s-l-o-w d-o-w-n. In thirty-six hours today he can go from the jet age to the ox age, and the sudden change can be traumatic. In all aspects of his life and work he will have need of patience and perseverance. Without these virtues he is almost sure to crack up.

Government officials and the people in general are in no great rush to get things done. The missionary may have to wait six months to get his things out of customs and it may take a year to get legal residence papers. It probably will take two years to get a telephone.

It may be necessary to stand in line hours a day to buy milk and bread - when there is any. Public transportation may be very spasmodic. Four buses may come at the same time and then none for four hours. It may take a month to get payment on a check at the bank. And all the while the American missionary is fussing and fuming - and his blood pressure goes up.

C. Adaptability.

Confucius said on one occasion, "When you enter a new territory, be sure to enquire concerning its customs." Our English language counterpart is, "when in Rome do as the Romans do." When the American Missionary arrives in most other countries of the world, he finds himself in an entirely different world. In a word, the entire culture is different from anything he has known up to that point.

Obviously, if he is to be a success, he must adapt to certain customs and language of his host country. This is not to imply compromise or the accepting of the morality of a country. The missionary cannot isolate himself from the people. Everything possible must be done so as not be the stereotyped "ugly American." Americans are usually arrogant, loud-mouthed and culturally insensitive in other countries. The average American missionary first-termer has "all the answers" and is ready "to set everyone straight." "After all, the American way of doing things is the best and only way of doing things." The person who is unable to change his ways will probably not last more than a year or two on the mission field.

D. Emotional stability.

The wear and tear of life on the mission field is considerably greater than here at home. Persons with an inferiority complex or those afflicted with phobias, extreme negative attitudes, pessimism or cynicism and frustrations of various kinds have difficulty adjusting to life on the mission field. Now at home there must be a personal, intelligent confrontation of one's own hang-ups. Mental health and emotional immaturity account for perhaps 50 per cent of all the drop-outs on the mission field.

E. Without a superiority complex.

Up to fifty years ago the words "Christianity" and "civilization" were used almost interchangeably. Many missionaries thought of themselves as playing a "civilizing" as well as a "Christianizing" role. Many missionaries no longer entertain such notions, but convey their sense of superiority more subtly. The very fact that he arrives with a container of personal effects conveys the impression that American goods are superior to others because why else would he go to all that trouble and expense?

In many countries the missionary is still treated with a certain degree of deference, partly as a carry-over from the past and partly because third world culture has always shown kindness and hospitality to strangers. It is easy for this to cause the missionary to be impressed with his importance and come to expect this kind of treatment and then take offense or become angry if it doesn't take place.

The peoples of the third world sincerely appreciate the missionary who has a genuine appreciation of them and their culture.