



# Prep for Goers

## 8 Practices to Become the Missionary Team Leaders Want on Their Teams

People planning to move overseas for missions understand that life on the field is full of unknowns, difficulties, spiritual warfare, and a ton of “new” – a new language, culture, type of work, schedule, food, and more.

What are the best practices for preparing to face all those changes and obstacles on the field? We want to share 8 areas to dig into before moving to a new context.


The first 3 practices focus on skills every Christian should develop:

### 1. Pursue the Lord.

Do not underestimate the importance of growing in your personal love relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. A consistent daily quiet time is the bare minimum. The goal is a vibrant relationship with the Lord in which you experience His Presence, go deep in His Word, abide in His love, receive conviction and correction, actively engage in spiritual warfare, and enjoy Him. Pursue deep abiding in Christ, communing with Him all day long. Abide in Christ’s love and rehearse your identity as a beloved child of God. Strengthen family rhythms of prayer together as a couple and with your children.

#### Practical Steps to Consider:

- Commit to a Bible reading and memorization plan.
- Plan regular spiritual retreats (half-day or 24-hour) to pursue God’s presence.
- Read a good book on prayer, such as *Prayer* by Tim Keller or *With Christ in the School of Prayer* by Andrew Murray.
- Regularly meet with a small group for accountability and prayer.

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- For families, solidify daily times for prayer together as a couple and for family Bible study.

## 2. Pursue the Lost.

One does not arrive on the mission field and suddenly become a consistent, bold evangelist; this is a skill that must be intentionally developed. Look for a community that prioritizes gospel sharing, both in everyday settings of school and work, and regularly in the community with strangers and acquaintances. You may need to lead out in this if your local church does not already have this! Pray for God to give you a burden for the lost and boldness to seize opportunities. Think through how to grow in this area.

### Practical Steps to Consider:

- Learn and practice a simple gospel tool. Practice it so much you could do it in your sleep!
- Make a list of 5-10 people in your life who need to hear the gospel. Pray for them, and pursue opportunities to share with them.
- Schedule a weekly time to go out with a friend to pray and share the gospel. If this intimidates you, just be willing to try!
- Look for someone to mentor you in this area. Seek out community who are committed to evangelism and will hold you accountable.
- Read a good book on evangelism, such as *Any Three* by Mike Shipman or *The Master Plan of Evangelism* by Robert Coleman.



### **3. Serve and participate in your local church meaningfully.**

Church is not meant to be a spectator sport! Pursue both meaningful fellowship and meaningful service. Participate in a regular small group that is centered on not only bible study and fellowship, but accountability and openness. This requires intentionality to walk in the light with others by sharing our weaknesses, struggles, dreams, and sins. You may need to lead out in this in your small group and church! Also, look for ways to serve. Cultivate a servant's heart that is willing to do anything, and look for ways to take initiative and lead out as you see needs.


#### **Practical Steps to Consider:**

- Be a faithful church member. Prioritize your church community and meetings.
- Meet weekly with a small group for meaningful, heart-level, Word-centered fellowship. If you do not have this, ask 2-3 friends. If you are already in a small group, lead out in sharing heart issues honestly in your group.
- If you are not already serving meaningfully, talk with your church leaders about needs you can fill. (Developing regular gospel outreach would be a great service!)
- Read a good book on biblical community such as *Life Together* by Bonhoeffer.

The next 3 practices focus on normal life skills or “adulting” skills:

### **4. Develop a strong work ethic and time management skills.**

New missionaries need to be prepared to work diligently in the mission task. Long term workers need to be prepared to treat language learning like a full-time job in their first



term. The mission task of evangelism, discipleship, church planting, and leadership development is a full-time job. Goers need experience working 40+ hours a week.


Additionally, new missionaries need to be able to manage their own weekly schedules, including proper rest, time with the Lord, and a full work schedule. Language learners are often responsible for scheduling their own language learning programs that include time with teachers and helpers, time practicing in the community, and personal study. Mission work is different from most “normal jobs” in that it does not have regular working hours. New missionaries must learn to be proactive in time management. They are responsible to manage their self-care needs such as proper rest, sabbath, regular exercise, and fellowship as well.

#### **Practical Steps to Consider:**

- Work a full-time job (or part-time if a student).
- Keep a weekly schedule. Plan your schedule every Sunday, and share your schedule with a mentor or mature friend who can give wise feedback and provide accountability.
- Read good books on time management, Sabbath and/or self-care such as *Do More Better* by Challies or *The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry* by Comer.

#### **5. Strengthen emotional health.**

Work on any emotional health issues such as fear, anxiety, stress management, or depression. If you have a history of any of these issues, get help from a counselor or mentor. There is no shame in getting help for emotional health; we have done it many times! Seek to get to the root of the issues, and practice strategies to help you thrive in



any environment. Even if you must delay your departure date for several months to become healthy, do it! God wants you to experience healing, and the challenges of life on the field often exacerbate tendencies towards fear, anxiety, depression, etc.

### **Practical Steps to Consider:**

- Read a good book on emotional health or particular emotional health issues you deal with, such as *The Emotionally Healthy Leader* by Scazzero. (We also have several podcast episodes on this topic).
- Meet with a Christian counselor or mentor to help you get to the root of the issues and develop healthy coping strategies.
- Regular rest, a healthy diet, exercise, journaling, and heart-level friendships go a long way in promoting emotional health. Do not neglect these basics!

### **6. Develop communication and conflict resolution skills.**

New team members need to be able to communicate their needs and expectations clearly to their teammates and team leaders. They also need to proactively address potential miscommunication, misunderstandings, offenses, and disappointments. If a team leader is disappointing a team member, the team member is responsible to share that with their leader. Team members need to ask for what they need.

Team members need to know what the Bible says about conflict resolution, and be prepared to walk in those principles. Ignoring conflict, talking to others about conflict, and harboring bitterness all greatly hinder team health. Members need to walk in the light together and have nothing in their hearts against one another.



### **Practical Steps to Consider:**


- Study the Bible on conflict resolution, and look for opportunities to apply the principles of direct, honest, loving communication, listening, and forgiving.
- Ask your church leadership for good resources on conflict resolution. Ask for coaching from trusted leaders on communication and conflict resolution.

### **7. Dig deeper into missiology, and come to the field with a teachable spirit.**

Intentionally study biblical missiology before coming to the field. Learn the theme of God's heart for the nations found in the metanarrative of the Bible. Study Paul's missionary journeys and epistles to see the biblical pattern of mission work. Work through important missions topics such as the exclusivity of Christ, the difference between lost and unreached, the priority of disciple-making and healthy church formation and equipping locals to do the mission task. Pursue opportunities in ministries that are patterning after the biblical model of broad evangelism, disciple-making, and healthy church formation. Pray regularly for unreached peoples and places.

### **Practical Steps to Consider:**

- Study the expansion of the Gospel through the New Testament church, particularly Paul's missionary journeys and practices.
- Read good books on biblical missiology such as *Paul the Missionary* by Schnabel and *Missionary Methods* by Allen.
- Pray regularly for unreached peoples and places with resources like the Joshua Project.



**8. Go on a short-term trip to see the location, participate in the work, and count the cost.**

While this is not a requirement, we have found it helpful for prospective team members to make a short-term trip to join the team in ministry before committing to serve long term. This allows goers to better understand what they're signing up for, and makes their commitment more meaningful. It also allows them to count the cost and prepare to persevere through difficulty. This decreases the chance of people arriving for their long-term service and being completely unprepared and leaving the field quickly. This also stirs up goers' hearts for the place and people they are going to serve, and informs their prayer lives.

**Practical Steps to Consider:**

- Look into opportunities to travel to the prospective team and join them in ministry for a week.
- Connect with field workers in the prospective area. Get on their prayer groups; schedule a call to learn more about their team and work.

