

First Step in Considering Missionary Service

by Tom Wilson

The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding the call of God and being surrendered to His guidance and direction in considering missionary service.

Duration: 1:02:05

Scripture: Psalm 119:11, Proverbs 4:23, Proverbs 16:9, Matthew 6:33, Acts 9:5, 2 Corinthians 8:5, James 4:13-15

Topics: "Missionary Service"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of recognizing that God is the one who leads and directs our plans. He discusses the call of God and how it may not always be a dramatic, audible experience, but rather a guiding and leading from the Lord. The speaker also highlights the significance of personal inventory evaluation and practical advice for potential missionaries. The sermon concludes with the mention of a book on global strategy and the importance of learning languages for effective missionary work.

Transcript

Let's have a word of prayer together, and then we'll make a start. Our God and Father, once again, we are thankful for this opportunity to spend this time together, and to be able to consider this important subject. And, Father, again, we just ask for your help, and your guidance, and your direction.

And, Father, we pray that you would be the one working in the lives of individuals to call those to service, that you would have to be there. We pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.

As you've heard already this morning, the emphasis today is upon missions, thinking primarily of foreign missions. Although the Lord does call various people to various ministries, we're very thankful for each one that the Lord places within their home assembly, to be able to serve there, for those who called to serve in foreign places. I was reading something recently from a little book by W.E. Vine on the divine plan of missions.

And he says in that, There was no appeal to the churches by the missionaries to send out laborers. There was no humanly arranged effort to meet the tremendous needs of other lands. Everything was done by the Spirit of God.

Our purpose here this morning is not to be able to give an emotional appeal, or in any way to challenge people along those lines. We truly believe that that is the sovereign work of God's Spirit to do that. But what we want to help people do is to be able to think through some of the issues that are related to the idea of going to the mission field.

I have been in Ireland for just two years. My father was a missionary in Zimbabwe, in Africa, for 11 years. He was there and has been involved in full-time ministry, an itinerant ministry here in the United States since returning.

Neither of us felt that we were the best qualified to be leading this seminar. So one of the things that we did was we sent out a questionnaire by email and asked some of the missionaries who are actively serving and some who have retired for some of their input on a number of questions. And if you'll see, I think it's almost in the back of your binder, there's the notes.

On the back side of that, we've done just a very brief summary of some of the information that was gleaned from that. And there were some very helpful things that we'll be sharing, particularly in relation to question 8 and question 11. We'll be going into more detail in the seminar itself.

But just to highlight a few things on the back here, you'll see that there were 24 missionaries who responded. I don't remember how many were sent out to. We only sent it out to people that I knew and who were on email, so it was limited.

But you see that we spoke with people who were commended as early as 1946 and as recently as 1995 with an average of 19 years of service. So these were people who have been actively serving the Lord for a long time. They're commended from a number of different countries and are serving on 14 different fields.

The average age of those who, when they first went out to the foreign field, was 28 years of age. The oldest couple was, the husband was 50 and the wife was 45. The youngest couple was 22 and 21.

So we see that there's a great range there. And I think we tend to see a movement towards people going out a little bit later with additional training and more experience in serving the Lord in their own assemblies. And we'll talk more about that as well.

One of the questions, and we'll make reference to this again later, was whether or not they had visited the country to which they were hoping to serve before they went out there. Eleven of them said that they did. Thirteen said that they had not.

When we asked them if someone wrote to them and said, would you recommend a visit, 16 of them were very strong, very adamant, saying yes, definitely. We would recommend that if someone was interested in serving the Lord on this field, that they would come and visit the field first. Five people said it was a good idea, possibly a little bit more ambivalent on that.

And three were very strong and dogmatic, no, that we need to accept that if God has called us, we go regardless of what that field is like. So just to show you again, there's some very strong feelings on both sides of that. The other thing I just want to point out as well, on question 10, whether or not they are serving on the same field as when they originally went out.

And we see that there were some people who went out to certain areas, and then for some reason, and we don't have details on those reasons, there was a change in their field of ministry. And I'm sure that if we didn't ask them, but I'm sure there would be many people who would have said that what they expected to do when they got there turned out to be very different than what they went out intending to do. And what we need to recognize is that God is the one who leads in all of these things.

And although we make plans, we need to hold those plans with a very loose hand, recognizing that God will lead and direct as we go along. On the front side of that sheet, we have just three brief areas that we'd like to look at this morning. I'm going to speak with you for a few moments about understanding the call of God, and then my father will speak about personal inventory evaluation, and then we'll kind of collaborate on some practical advice at the end there.

We want to try and leave some time for questions at the end, and so we ask you to hold your questions until then. Because of the number of people who are here, it makes it a little bit more difficult for questions and answers, but we will try and allow time for that. So let's look first at this area of understanding the call of God.

In my own personal experience, this was probably one of the most difficult areas for us to deal with. And based on people that I've spoken to, I would guess that there's a lot of other people who are struggling with the same thing. How do we understand what the call of God is? How do we know if God has called us to serve him in a full-time capacity? It reminds me a little bit of when I was a student at Emmaus, and there was a friend of mine there who had just gotten engaged.

And I think I had just broken up with a girl and was all confused about this whole romance and relationship idea. And I said to him, How do you know that this is the girl that you are to marry? And I didn't like his answer at all. He says, When the time comes, you'll know.

I wanted some measurable statistic that I could say, Okay, this is the one. I will definitely have no doubt that this is the one. But he just said, When the time comes, you will know.

And I don't think that there is anything that we can tell you this morning about the call of God that is going to be a measurable standard by which you can say, Yes, I have been definitely called by God. Let me mention two books to you quickly as well. One is one that my grandfather wrote called, God's Called a Special Service.

And I have to admit that when I was first thinking and praying about serving the Lord, I didn't finish the book. I became dissatisfied. Am I allowed to say that? I became dissatisfied with the book because it wasn't answering the question that I wanted.

It's a very helpful book, a very well-written book, a lot of wonderful information about it. He goes through ten people in Scripture who were called by God. But as I looked through them, all of them had direct revelation from God.

And I'm not expecting any direct revelation from God at this point. So how do I know? Now, he does end up with a little summary at the end of the book where he does give some guidelines, and it's well worth looking at it for that. The other thing you should have received in your packet from CML, the book Global Strategy, which has just been revised and updated.

And there's a very helpful chapter in there on the call by Ken Fleming, and I encourage you to read that. I think that you'll find that helpful as well. I think part of the problem for me stemmed from the fact that I heard so many missionaries, so many full-time workers, down through the years, talking about when or how they were called by the Lord into full-time service.

And when you hear that phrase, when you hear people say that, you kind of get this idea in your mind that God spoke to them audibly, that there was a call like we would read about in Scripture, a bright, shining light that would come. I remember a friend of mine told me a story. He said that there was a man who came to the elders, and he said, The Lord has called me to go into full-time preaching.

And I said, Well, how do you know that? And he said, Well, I was out in the field working, and I looked up in the clouds, and there was a cloud formation, and it said, PC. And he said, I just knew that it meant preach Christ. And the elder said, Well, how do you know it didn't mean plant corn? And we shouldn't be expecting, I don't think at this point, that God is going to be giving us some direct revelation.

But I think we do need to have some guidance and some guidelines on how. And so we had asked, in the survey that we had done, we had asked them to briefly summarize how the Lord called into missionary service. And so we have some first-hand testimonies.

Perhaps you've heard many of these things from the missionaries themselves before in reports that have been given. But I just want to draw a few things from the words that they have stated so that you can have help in understanding these things. I have to keep moving here because we're going to run out of time.

It's a lot to cover in just an hour. Let me just read some of this to you. I wrote this out just because I knew that because of the tightness of time, if I start going verbatim, I'll go on forever and ever.

But let me just read some things to you here. After much prayer and discussion with other mature Christians, I came to the conclusion, this is speaking about myself, that I should not be looking for such direct revelation, and for that reason admit that I feel uncomfortable using the phrase, the call of God. In my life, God used a specific, unlikely incident to create a burden, and that was about as strong as I was willing to say it, a burden that was placed upon my heart to dedicate my life to serve him more that ultimately led, over a period of several years, to our going to Ireland.

Based on the responses to our survey, it would seem that others would concur. As Mark Hartley in Spain says, I don't think a call is a one-time thing or a lightning bolt that hits you one night. I prefer to use the word burden because I see it more as a gradual process, being willing to go and do whatever the Lord has for you.

Floyd Schneider, formerly of Austria, now at Emmaus, says, I understand the call to be the Lord putting desires in our heart to serve him. We do what we think will please him most and go where we think we can serve him best. Before we went to Austria, people would ask if I was called to go to Austria.

I told them I wanted to please the Lord by going, and that in five years I would tell them if I had been called or not. It's much easier in retrospect to look back and say, yes, the Lord did call me. It's very hard to know in advance that the Lord has called you.

But again, these burdens and these desires that the Lord puts upon your heart. Stephen Yule in Portugal says, The Lord placed a desire upon our hearts. Circumstances pointed to overseas service.

Doors opened. The elders that are commending the assembly confirmed our decision. It's also interesting to learn of the various ways in which missionaries were led to the mission field.

For many, the influence of their family life was key, and I think this is very important for parents to take note of as well. Prince Ray Barham of Zambia was brought up on the mission field and gradually became aware that the Lord wanted him back in the land of his birth. Gavin Aitken of Brazil says, It seemed as if my childhood was spent in missionary get-togethers, send-offs, prayer meetings, conferences, etc.

My parents fostered this missionary interest over the years and lived to see the day when I would be on the mission field. Another influence came through reading missionary biographies in my early years. So the family had a very profound influence.

He grew up feeling like he was always at these missionary get-togethers, and his life was permeated by it. And so parents, I encourage you with that. Make sure that you don't keep your children home from the missionary reports and the missionary meetings.

It has a great influence upon their hearts and minds. And then also the idea of biographies are very influential. If you are thinking about serving the Lord overseas, read missionary biographies.

Read how the Lord has worked in other people's lives. Rachel Malatik, who we heard of, sorry, we didn't hear of her earlier, but she serves in other areas as well, says, I was raised in a missionary-minded family. We had missionaries in our home regularly who planted a vision in me for the foreign field.

We prayed daily for the missionaries. On the other hand, her husband Michael says, for me it was largely a matter of obedience to the word of God in accordance with the gifts, abilities, and interests that he had given to me. So we see that there are various ways that people were led to go out.

Richard Clark in Spain says that the Lord gradually gave him the conviction through his first year of university that he should not spend his life in the career he was preparing for, but that he should spend his life on the mission field serving the Lord. Throughout the year that conviction grew stronger and with growing peace in his heart, he knew that the Lord was calling him to be a missionary. But for his wife Connie, it was a more dramatic experience.

She says that while having her devotions one morning when she was 18 years old, the Holy Spirit clearly spoke through a verse in the Bible with a definite and clear call. For some months she couldn't believe this was for her, yet the Lord continued to confirm it until she really believed that it was true. But she then decided she didn't want to be a missionary, and a rebellious inner struggle ensued for the next six months.

When the Lord won that battle in her heart, she had an immediate joyous desire to be a missionary, and the next day changed her major in college. So the Lord had spoken through his word, and again that was one of the things that, again, we see again and again the missionaries advising and counseling, spend time in the Word of God. Be able to hear the Word of God as it's spoken to you from the pages of Scripture.

The next area that was a major struggle for me, once I was convinced within my heart that the Lord was calling me to foreign missionary service, was where. And again, we had asked the missionaries whether that was something that they felt. Do you understand the call to missionary service to include the place of service? Sixteen of them said not necessarily.

Some of them said, well, it might come later, but the initial call will be to serve the Lord, and then he will lead and guide and direct into the place that we should go. Again, speaking of my own personal experience, I was now convinced that I was to devote my life to serving the Lord, but the question was where. Thus began a process of personal evaluation and an effort to match my gifts with needs and opportunities.

But there were so many needs and so many opportunities that we didn't feel the Lord was clearly guiding us to any one place yet. So we continued to wait and to pray, to write to missionaries and to seek counsel, and eventually the Lord placed a burden on our hearts for Ireland. We asked other missionaries if they felt that the call to missionary service included the place of service.

Most felt it did not. Mike Atwood believes that we are called to a specific ministry, not a specific location. The Malatech says theirs was a call to a people group, so they went where they could best reach them.

They're not actually serving in the country right now, but they are outside of the country ministering to that same people group. Gavin Akin wrote, Missionaries in the Book of Acts were commended to the grace of God, not a specific location. It was a boyhood dream of mine to serve the Lord in the country of Angola, but I ended up in Brazil due to the war conditions in Angola at the time.

Floyd Schneider says a call can include the location, for we tend to go where we have interests or burdens. And Mark Harkey says, as we by faith move forward in obedience to the burden God has laid on our hearts, he will gradually show us a specific country and even city that he has prepared for us. Dave Johnson of the Philippines emphasized, I believe the most important thing is to be surrendered to the Lord, and if you believe that he is leading you to serve overseas, then he will guide you to the place or places he wants you to serve.

And then we talked a little bit about this idea already of whether or not there should be a visit to the land. Beth and I wondered whether it would be a good idea for us to visit the country we were praying about serving in. We wrote to one missionary who said that we shouldn't visit, but should wait until we were certain of where the Lord was calling us.

So we posed the same question in our missionary questionnaire. We found that there were strongly held beliefs for and against. Charles Shorten, who has retired from service in Angola, was unequivocal, no, accept the call of God.

His wife Betty adds, in my case I longed to do so, to make a visit to Angola, but felt that it would be a lack of full conviction as to God's calling. Anyway, in those days it was too expensive to consider. Similarly, Floyd Pierce, retired from Brazil, says, no, unless he or she is independently wealthy, which not too many of us are, even then I would hesitate to recommend such a visit.

Richard and Connie Clark emphasize that my feelings or intuition upon visiting a country do not determine a call. That's very important to remember. That your feelings, if you like the place or not, is not an indication of whether or not God is calling you.

Feelings can be very deceiving. If I am called, I go because of obedience to the Lord. Connie is personally thankful that she never made a trip to spy out the land, as she did not like Spain upon first impression or even for some time afterwards.

For her it was a question of obedience, and that lesson was very worthwhile. On the other hand, Hank Gelling of Belgium would strongly encourage someone to visit first. He said, absolutely, I would say it's almost obligatory.

And Gavin Aiken agrees very definitely. It removes the romanticism and helps the person face reality. Floyd Schneider says it's usually a good idea for the would-be missionary to meet the people he'll be working with or beside.

And Mike Atwood writes, it will help getting to know the candidate, and if he would fit in, as well as help the candidate see things for himself. People can have a real misconception about a field. Now, as I said, we'll leave time at the end for questions.

I'm going to turn over to my dad now, and he'll talk about the idea of personal evaluation. It's good to have this opportunity to share some of the things that perhaps I found applicable in my own life and in my service to the Lord. I grew up on the mission field.

My parents were missionaries in Angola. And so I can relate very much to people like Ray Barham who understood that they had grown up among these people. I had visited Africa, so I knew something of what conditions were like there.

But as I thought about this and as I thought about the question of preparation for missionary service, there were certain things that I have found were absolutely vital in my own life. I became a Christian when I was very young, and as has been said, exposure to missions and missionary service was something that I'd always known. But there was this sense of, what is it that I'm being called to do? We find it in the Gospels, and I found it interesting glancing through the book Global Strategy last night that Ken Fleming also refers to the same thing, that there were four times in Peter's life when God, the Lord Jesus, directly said to him, follow me.

The first time was when he was involved in his normal day-to-day occupation. He was out there fishing, and the Lord saw him and said to him, follow me. And it says that Peter left all and followed the Lord.

Then we find that later on, when the Lord was going to reveal to the disciples the fact that he was going to have to go to the cross and die, there was going to be the offense of the cross, and Peter, you remember, rebuked the Lord. And the Lord had to say to him, Peter, you're going to have to understand that there is to be an offense in following me. And so he says, I don't care what you might think about is going to happen.

Peter, follow me. So there is going to be offense. And we've been hearing something of that.

We were talking to a brother just very briefly here before the meeting started, and if you've been reading missionary activities, missionary reports at all, you will know about the people that were killed in India for the sake of the gospel. A man with his two sons, they came and they locked the doors of the car, set the car on fire, and he was burned to death for no other reason except the fact that he was a preacher of the gospel. So there is an offense to following the Lord Jesus Christ.

And then we find that at the end of John's gospel, there's a third time when the Lord Jesus said directly to Peter himself, follow me. And it came in the context of the Lord saying to Peter, the day is going to come. He says, today you get up, you dress yourself, you go where you please.

The day is going to come when somebody else is going to come and pick you up and take you where you don't want to go. And you're not going to be pleased with the outcome. We understand from tradition that Peter was crucified because he was a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ.

So that in spite of the outcome, we are to follow when God calls. And then at the end of that chapter, there's a very interesting little thing. And this is something which perhaps we all need to remind ourselves about.

And that is that when the Lord said for the fourth time to Peter, follow me. Peter looked around and he saw John standing there. And he said, but what about him? The Lord said, don't worry about him.

You follow me. So that it is something which becomes a personal responsibility. Now, as we look at this, and being assured of the fact of the Lord's call, there are certain things that we need to do.

By the way, if you don't have a copy of the handout, there are some additional ones here. And maybe if you'd like to put your hand up, some of our friends here at the front would be willing to get one to you. The first thing that I suggested was your relationships.

How are your relationships? And, of course, the primary relationship is the relationship that we have with the Lord. What is my personal dealings with the Lord day by day? And, of course, we go over to 2 Corinthians chapter 8 and verse 5. And I realize that the context there is in connection with giving. But the Apostle Paul commended the Macedonian believers in 2 Corinthians chapter 8. He says, They gave themselves first to the Lord.

And this is going to be the place where we start. There must be that personal dedication to the Lord. What is it that the Lord wants you to do? You remember that the Apostle Paul, on the road to Damascus, the time when he was converted, his first question was, Who are you, Lord? The second question was, What will you have me to do? It was a question of personal dedication to the Lord.

There has to be a strong, personal commitment to the Lord and a tender conscience with regard to his claims day by day. And then a second area that I think is absolutely vital is what is your relationship with the elders in your assemblies? This is something which is absolutely vital because they are going to be able to give advice to you as to how they see your area of spiritual growth and maturity. They're going to be able to tell whether you are fitted for A, the country that you maybe have in mind.

There are certain countries which place tremendous demand on the physical capacity of a person so that if their health is not good, they're going to be able to help to deal with you. So there's going to have to be this open communication with the elders in your assembly. There is also the fact that you're going to want to be assured of their full confidence in you that you're going to be able to do the work that God is calling you to do.

Sometimes we feel that we're ready. David has referred to this already. We've been told at this conference one of the hardest things that we have to do is to wait.

When I was really quite young, I really felt that I wanted to go into missionary service and my elders at that time told me to wait. And I have to confess that I was pretty rebellious about it. I thought I was ready to go and they said wait.

And God said to me, and looking back, I have to recognize that they were very wise in the things that they said. The third thing is that there has to be that submissive spirit. And even though, as I said, I tended to feel rather rebellious that their advice for me to wait, I realize now that it was good advice so that there must be a submissiveness to the guidance of the elders in your assembly.

A third area of relationship applies primarily to those who are married. And this is what is your relationship with your spouse. And here again, I think that this is something vital.

Because unless you are united in your desires with regard to this that you're going to do, there's going to be areas of friction which are going to place tremendous strains on your marriage. I find that when we were living in Zimbabwe, we were told at that time and whether it is true or not, or whether it was effective or not, I don't know, but the spiritists, the people who believe in spiritualism or whatever you call it, were praying to Satan for the breakup of Christian marriages. And you're going to be faced, particularly in some of the foreign fields, in some of the primitive societies, in some of the areas in which God might call some of you to work, there are going to be some tremendous temptations that you're going to face.

We were told in the prayer meeting this morning that a new little assembly has just been started in the city of Las Vegas. And you have to recognize that those who are living and working there are going to daily be faced with tremendous temptations morally and in so many different areas of life. And unless there is this strong commitment to your spouse and open communication between yourselves, that this is an area where there could be absolute disaster.

Another area, of course, has to be in the area of total fidelity to your wife, to your spouse. That unless there is that, unless there is that total faithfulness, again, it can lead to tragedy, it can lead to the breakup of your testimony, it can bring disgrace on the name of the Lord Jesus. So there has to be that recognition that you're together in these things.

And then, of course, as I said at the beginning, there has to be agreement as to the goals that you're intending to follow. And I would say that this also includes matters of finance. I've done a little bit of pre-marital counseling.

And one of the things that I often speak about as I deal with this is the questions of mutual agreement with regard to finances. Sometimes one partner in the marriage might be, tend to be very open-handed and generous. The other partner might tend to be rather tight and want to keep a tight rein on the purse strings.

And unless there is a mutual understanding in those areas between the members of the family, that again can lead to terrible disaster. One of the things that we have to recognize, and again it's a thing that Ken Fleming deals with in his little book, and there's also a little booklet that is available through CMMML written by Carl Knott, one of the missionaries in Spain. How do you get there from here? And he deals with the question of financial support.

And of course he does say that many of the mission boards will advise that you go around and speak and become known, make appeals for money, get pledges, and that is one route. But mostly among the assemblies the route is that we look to the Lord. We don't make our personal needs known.

And there are going to be times when there's going to be tight as far as finances are concerned. There are going to be real needs, and the Lord is going to challenge you and maybe challenge your commitment to

Him with regard to work in that specific place because there's not very much money available. What about your family? If you are older and have children, what is your relationship with your family? Are they in agreement with going? Because sometimes this can also lead to real problems.

Not only that, there's the area of loving discipline with your children. We're told in 1 Timothy chapter 3 that if a man does not know how to control his family, then how can he be missionaries and to missionary activity, encouraging them along these lines. Shared goals, especially with the children, so that those children, and when we were considering, when we finally went out, we had six children ranging in age from 15 down to two, and we used to have family conferences, and this is what we're doing.

This is the stage that we're at, and we try to endeavor to bring our family along with us so that they would be able to be in harmony with us in this. And then there's the area of relationship with co-workers. And I know that this is one area where on the mission field you're going to be thrown into close contact, maybe on a mission station, very little outside contact with others, and missionaries all tend to be very strong-minded, and unless you can know what it is to be able to work with others, to be able to quietly present your point of view without getting angry, without compromising your principles, it's going to be very difficult to work.

And so here are some areas of relationship. And then personal assessment. What about your personal life and testimony? Do you have a strong and consistent Christian life and testimony? What about in your workplace? Do people look at you and know that you are a believer? When I was growing up, there was a saying, and it goes back to the old sailing days about nailing your colors to the mast, that in those days when they were going into battle, it was always possible to pull down the flag, identifying which side they were on.

And so the captain would send a sailor up to the top of the mast, and the flag, identifying who they were and what side they were on, would actually be nailed to the mast so that it could not be pulled down. Do people at work know that you are a Christian, or are you compromising in your testimony in the workplace? What is your reputation? Do they see you as somebody that's lazy, or do they speak of you as being someone who is conscientious, someone who is honest and trustworthy? These are areas that are so important. What is your reputation in the assembly? And again, we have to emphasize that if you're not busy here, you're not going to be busy anywhere else.

Get involved in the work of the assembly. What is your reputation in the community, the area where you live? Do people know you as Christians? And we've already heard about letting your light shine in the area so that people know who you are and what you are. And D.L. Moody, one time, is reported to have said that character is what a man is in the dark.

When you think nobody is looking, when you think that nobody knows you, how do you behave? Do you behave as a Christian, or do you compromise? And then there's the area of consistent pattern of prayer and Bible study. And maybe I should have started with this. Unless I have set patterns in my life of spending time set aside that nothing is going to interfere with, of prayer, of discipline, communion with God, of reading His Word, of studying His Word, we're going to have great problems in days that lie ahead.

One of the advices that was given to my dad as a 15-year-old when he first trusted the Lord was buy a good alarm clock and a good Bible and make sure that you get up real early so that you can spend time studying the Word of God before you go to school, before you go to work, before you become involved in

the affairs of the day. Now, I know that some people are night owls. They can do it at night.

Other people tend to be early birds and they can get up early, bright, and able to go ahead with that. But set aside a definite time, disciplined time, set aside for intimate communion with the Lord and for personal feeding on the Word of God. What is your present involvement in the activities of your home assembly? And just very quickly, they say that there are different kinds of people in an assembly.

There are people that are like stones. They just sit there. They don't move.

There are people that are like wheelbarrows. They need to be pushed before they'll move. There are people that are like sponges.

You have to squeeze them to get anything out of them. There are people that are like honeycombs. They just drip goodness.

And we can assess ourselves. You know where you stand. You know what your personality is.

Do you attend the majority of the meetings that you're able to get to? Do you participate in some of the activities that go on? Obviously, we cannot get involved in all the activities. We have to set priorities. But are you involved where you are able? Do you see things that need to be done and do them without having to be asked to do them? Volunteering where your skills can be used.

Maybe some of us are better in the kitchen. Maybe some of us do a good job scrubbing the floor. All these things are necessary.

There was an article in Moody Monthly a while ago that said, thank God for janitors. We don't often think of janitors as being servants of God and yet how important they are. Now, what about your language skills? And this is something which as a foreigner I almost hesitate to touch because I see great areas of lack in American education particularly when it comes to language skills.

Do you know your own language well enough? Are you skilled in grammar and vocabulary? Because if you're not and you're going to go to a foreign country where you're going to be learning a foreign language you have to have at least a basic grasp of principles of grammar and vocabulary so that you can get involved in these things. And I have to say that here is one area where age definitely does become a factor. Somebody was saying to me that this seminar was primarily for young people and I agree.

And if you're young and you're still your mind is still flexible enough that you can learn start learning now start learning a foreign language. Maybe it won't be the language that you necessarily will use in the future but it is good mental exercise. I didn't go out to the mission field myself until I was 40 years of age and I found it very difficult and I have to confess that I never really fully grasped the language.

Do you have a definite goal as to the type of work that you have to do? That you're hoping to do? Obviously evangelism is going to be a primary and church planting should be paramount. The utilization of your present skills. If you are trained in a trade or in a profession these things can be used.

Medical work mechanical work. On Sunday we were at an assembly and there was a man going to a country which totally restricts the entry of missionaries but he is a doctor a pediatrician and he's going there to use his skill and this way he's going to be able to get into the country. The Lord can use these things in opening fields for you.

Communication with workers on the field that you hope to go to. They'll be able to give you advice and then are you flexible enough that if you get to that field and then find that you cannot use that particular goal that you had in mind are you flexible enough to go off into something else? I was trained as an electrician. My early exercise was to go to a mission hospital and work in the hospital as an electrician.

That door closed. The Lord opened another door and then I thought I was going to do village work going out into the rural areas. A war broke out just as the time we got to the country we weren't able to do that and I ended up teaching scripture in schools.

Can you be flexible that as the Lord closes certain doors and opens others that you're going to be able to accept that as coming from the Lord? We see in Acts chapter 16 that the Apostle Paul as he went out to do his missionary work we find in Acts 16 he wanted to go one direction and it says that the Lord closed that door and they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit. In verse 10 it says concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel in Macedonia they accepted and they went there. And then lastly what are your communication skills? Communicating in resolving disputes sometimes the work of a mediator is one of the most tedious, most necessary jobs that there are.

The ability to present your point of view calmly without losing your temper. One writer suggested at least 50% of the problem may well be with you and it's up to you to examine yourself and deal with that before you try to put other people right. What about dealing with problems dealing with difficulties before they become problems? If you see something that you're uncomfortable with if you see some worker maybe doing something and you don't understand deal with it first go and talk to the person deal with it before it becomes a problem that is going to bring a rift between you.

And then lastly what about dealing with authorities? Especially those of us from this country as we go out to foreign countries we're going to find that you are a visitor there. Can you deal with them courteously? Can you deal with them gently? Can you accept the fact that sometimes they're going to be very abrasive against you? Dealing with authorities how do you accept the authorities in this country? I have a nephew and with this I'm going to finish. I had a nephew when he was a teenager the rule in the town where he was living was that you could not go into the mall with no shoes on.

Guess what he did? He went into the mall with no shoes and then got very annoyed because the authorities reprimanded him for it. Can we work with the authorities? And so here's some areas in which we can examine ourselves in order to prepare ourselves for whatever work it is that the Lord is going to call us to. Al Davis.

Just to summarize a few things that Dad said things that I think were mentioned in there that came back again in the survey that we received from the missionaries we had asked them if there was any counsel that they would give to potential missionaries and much of that Dad incorporated into that personal evaluation there one of the things that came out very strongly was the importance of learning the language or learning a language making sure that your mind learns how to do that getting the skills to be able to do that. When I was in high school I had a year of Latin when I was at Emmaus I took a year of Greek and learning the Latin helped me do the Greek much better. Now going to Ireland I haven't had to learn an additional language but it's part of that process of your mind learning how to be able to do that.

An important suggestion that one of the missionaries made as well this was Stephen Ewell in Portugal he said if there are established assemblies in the country you're going to find out what they're like. They will not be a reproduction of the assembly where you come from. It's important to make sure that it's a

situation you are comfortable with so as not to create problems.

Certainly there are cultural issues that are at play in various countries as well we need to be aware of those and just things that we have accepted as being the way that things are done might not be done in other countries. One of the advice that was given to me early on as well was that when you go to a country determine that for at least a year or maybe two years that you're not going to try and change anything that's there. Recognize that there might be reasons why things that are done that are culturally bound that you don't understand as a foreigner coming in and so be willing to sit tight and to learn before you go and try to change the world.

One of the things again and again that came out from the surveys and has been mentioned already is the importance of having personal discipline in your own life. Recognize that as a missionary you are self-directed most of the time. Perhaps if you're involved with a school you might have a set schedule provided by the school but many missionaries are out there and you have to develop your own plan for the day.

What am I going to do during this week? And to be self-motivated enough to be able as we heard to be able to get up and to be studying the Word of God to be able to have our personal time of prayer to know when we're going to go out doing evangelism when we're doing teaching when we're doing discipling you have to have control over your own agenda each day. Something that was mentioned as well was the need for long-term missionaries. There are people who go out on a short-term basis and there's value in that as well to be able to get exposure but as we said many of these missionaries that we wrote to it has been their life.

They have devoted themselves wholeheartedly to that and it's best to be able to go out with that intention that unless the Lord directs otherwise this is how you will spend the rest of your life. One missionary wrote and said make yourself indispensable to your local assembly. If you were to leave your local assembly right now would they miss you? Or would they be glad that you're gone? We need to be so indispensable where we are or else we're not going to be much use somewhere else.

So make yourself indispensable there and to be a team player and not a maverick. Again as was mentioned many missionaries are strong minded people particularly those who are involved in pioneer work but there is that necessity to be a team player and to be able to work with others drawing on the strength that they have. We believe in the plurality of leadership in the local assembly and that needs to come into play in missionary service as well.

And someone said start now to practice the art of not being easily offended. I thought that was good. Not to be easily offended but it is easy for people to criticize you.

Whenever you stand up and do something people are going to criticize you and you need to be able to handle that when it comes your way. Someone else has said if you are hesitating or unsure wait. Don't try and get ahead of the Lord.

The Lord often does call us to be able to wait. And here's some strong words that we'll end this section with. It says if you believe becoming a missionary will make you the Christian you should be or will equip you to do what you should do stay home because you're dreaming.

Do it now and don't expect that when you get out there that that will happen. We want as we said to leave some time for questions here so I'll open it up now for questions. You'll have to speak up loudly it's hard to see you as well with the lights but raise your hand or stand up and if you have a question we'll try and get the expert over here to answer that for you.

Anybody have any questions? Yes sir. Okay. The question was for the recording do we know of any situation that would specifically exclude someone from being a missionary such as divorce? I think as long as your assembly are accepting of I realize that and I've a couple of years ago had to give a talk on the question of divorce and I realize that there are so many widely divergent views with regard to this.

However my personal view is that if your assembly are happy with your life as a strong and consistent Christian that your relationship with your present spouse or whatever is good and strong I do not see that necessarily as an obstacle. Obviously I did mention other things like health. A person who is suffering suffers in this country from ill health this could become a difficulty particularly if you go to a country like the Philippines where the climate is very very trying if you're a cold country person and you go where it's hot and humid you're going to suffer tremendously.

There are other areas similar to that I would imagine that could become obstacles for missionary service. I think the other thing just to mention with that and I think it's implied in what we've said but just to reiterate it is that it is the local assembly that commends. CMML and MSC are not a screening board they have no control over the missionaries they are a service organization that provides services to the missionaries and it is up to the local assembly to evaluate.

Once they have commended someone as a missionary CMML will then serve them but CMML does not have a screening process at all that they have any control over. So the question is whether your elders whether the local assembly is willing to commend you to the Lord's work. Other questions? You are either so perhaps especially if you don't wrongly recommend that you are in school for some time before you go out into the beach.

If you don't know what it is to do at home you're not going to know what it is to do a 58 hour job out in the field. And then also I want to say about the money working here sending out letters looking for money. The Lord has promised me that God has set my every need and it's not so far from the country that I live Mr. Stifler.

Yes, the question first of all of being employed in a job, I'm sure David will pardon my reference to him, when he finished at Emmaus he was ready to go then. He had done three years at Emmaus, he felt the Lord was calling him into full time service and yet my counsel to him at that time was that very thing. Take a job, learn what it is to be under the discipline of working as David said, a 40 hour week, not only learning the discipline of work but also the discipline of handling money.

You're going to be earning a wage, setting your budget so that you know how to handle the money because when you get out onto the mission field there's not going to be somebody looking over your shoulder, you're not going to have to punch a time clock, you're going to have to, as David has already stressed, be able to be self motivating. And then again the question of money really again a reference from our own family, when my dad went to Africa as a 21 year old, only with a letter of commendation from his assembly, unknown virtually in the city in which he lived, somebody came to him, in those days you didn't travel by plane, he went by ship and somebody came to him and handed him two small coins that were worth about four dollars. And he said to him if you ever run short of money here is something that

you can fall back on.

51 years later, at his 50th wedding anniversary, he put his hand in his pocket and took out those two small coins. God had provided for him for all of those years without any letters being sent out, even suggesting that there might be needs. The pattern apparently that the word of God sets down is that we present our needs to the Lord and he will supply out of the abundance that he has.

Any other questions? Yes, sir. Yeah, I would repeat the question here. If you're convinced that the Lord has called you and that you're well-suited, what would be the next step that you would take or the first step that you would take? Certainly, I would say that there should be a consultation with the elders all throughout that process, that it should be undergirded by prayer, that ultimately it is the assembly that is commending you to that work and you need to have their support and their encouragement to do it.

So I would say yes, that would be the first thing would be to speak with the elders. But that should have been an ongoing process. I think that communication with the elders needs to be an ongoing process and very often you're going to be the one who will need to take the initiative in doing that.

The elders are busy people and often caring for a great number of people. Let your burden be known to them so that they can pray along with you and they can be able to give you counsel and advice. They know you better.

Again, I think this idea of personal evaluation is good, but it's also helpful to have some objective evaluation that if you can have the elders evaluate you, again, you might think that you're ready, they might not think that you're ready. They might be able to point out some areas in your life where they think that you need to work on those areas, so that communication with them will be very helpful there. I think perhaps another area that has already been mentioned is communication with whoever it is in the country, working in the country that you might be interested in, so that they too can have some input into your life and into your exercise, your burden, as to what type of thing that you might be suitable for.

Yes, over there. Advice for singles? Well, not speaking from personal experience, obviously, but I think as you look at the handbook, there are a number of single missionaries who are serving on the field, and that there are opportunities for single people to be able to serve. There are challenges, obviously, involved with that as well, again, because you don't have perhaps the emotional support as you're going out that a couple might have, but again, I think that there are all sorts of opportunities for service for single people.

My grandfather did go out to Angola convinced that he should be a single man, and to be free to be able to serve the Lord, but found that in that culture, as I understand it, that was not a practical, it wasn't looked on well by the local people, so that there was a necessity for him to be married. I think, again, what David has mentioned with regard to loneliness, you're going to be out there by yourself. There's going to be maybe a couple working alongside of you.

You're going to be seeing things that you don't have, and these can become major areas of discouragement, but, again, there is a lot of, and to me, one of the scandals, if I may put it that way, of our missionary handbook, in one area maybe very encouraging, the number of single ladies that are on the mission field, and the relatively few number of single men, or even of married couples. I realize that there are reasons for this. Young men, perhaps, are trying to establish themselves in life, trying to get their career going, maybe trying to get their training completed, and then this becomes a thing that occupies so much time that there's little time left.

But it was emphasized last night by Tom Taylor that all of us, whether we're here or whether we're overseas, we're all of us missionaries. As Mr. Stifler said, we're either missionaries or a mission field. So wherever we are, we need to be involved in that service, and then we'll see how the Lord leads from that point on.

Yes. The question is, for single women, do we recommend they have an occupation? Certainly, I would say that that would be helpful. There are tremendous needs for nurses, for teachers, there are a number of missionary oriented schools, there's the Faith Academy in the Philippines, there's the Casey School in Zambia, there's Black Forest Academy in Germany, there are a number of Christian schools directly involved in teaching missionaries' children.

And this, of course, raises a whole other question, that what do parents do with their children? What do they do about education? And this is something that needs to be very seriously dealt with between the husband and wife before you go out to the mission field. Let me just mention an example where difficulties have arisen. I know of people who are involved in door-to-door work, and they feel very strongly that the men who are going out don't want to go out with a single woman doing door-to-door work because of the testimony that if someone sees them with a woman other than their wife doing that kind of work, it could create problems, perceptual problems.

So, there are limitations, I think, in that kind of work. But I think even in the area, there are lots of opportunities, even for things like personal discipleship and personal evangelism that can be done by single women without being involved in a profession, per se, on the field. There are opportunities for it.

But, again, it's one of those things that really, again, has to be handled on a case-by-case basis. But I think, again, it's important to know before you go out what you're planning to do and what you're going to be involved in and whether it's possible to do what you want to do in the country where you're hoping to go. I think our time is about gone here.

We'll ask to close in prayer and then we'll hang around for a few moments if anyone else has questions they'd like to ask us. Let's pray. Our Father, we thank Thee for the good number that are here this morning.

We thank Thee for the exercise of heart of so many with regard to Thy desire for their lives. And we will pray for them. We pray that Thou art to give very definite guidance.

We thank Thee for the interest in mission fields around the world. And we recognize that while need is not necessarily a call, yet we know that this is something that is sometimes laid on our heart as a burden which will lead to full-time service for Thyself. We pray, Father, that You'll give very definite help to each one that is here.

For some that perhaps might be older and that are involved in counseling with younger ones, we pray that grace and wisdom might be given to them, too. And we pray that above all, in all of this, that as we've been reminded at this conference, that we might let our light so shine as to glorify the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, who we ask it in His name and for His sake. Amen.

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