

# How to Become a Missionary

## A behind-the-scenes look at the missionary process.

How does a person become a missionary? What does it look like to go from calling to serving on the mission field? My hope is that this explanation will give you a better understanding of the culture and allow us to care better for our missionaries.

## Calling

Every missionary or ministry has a story of when they are called. Let's clarify some things the Bible says about calling and explore how someone would navigate this step of the missionary process.

### How do I know I am called?

*Proverbs 3:5-6*

*5 Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.*

*6 In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.*

*Matthew 28:18-20*

*18 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.*

*19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:*

*20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.*

**Calling to ministry is the intersection of God's will revealed in scripture and your heart's surrender to follow Him. God leads specifically to have you consider the possibility of a full-time ministry vocation.**

Things to consider in regard to calling:

- **Past Experience** - God will often use our past experience to bring success in our future ministry
  - Life Experience - difficulties, trials, lessons learned
  - Professional Experience - business or ministry experience
- **Circumstances** - God is able to arrange our circumstances to draw us to a point where ministry is a priority and can be considered a full-time calling
- **Mentors / Leaders** - Missionaries ALWAYS should have the blessing of those that know them best and lead them.
  - Becoming a missionary is not a solo activity it requires the help of many to see it through
  - Ask the advice of your pastor(s), parents, or other spiritual leaders in your life.
- **Passions** - God leads us according to our passions. He uses what we care deeply about to guide our paths.
  - Ask yourself, what need in the world do I want to fix? What is God burdening my heart to change?
- **Prayer** - Missionaries spend time seeking God for his peace and direction in their decision-making. A calling starts with God and ends with God.

\*Calling isn't always as dramatic as we would picture. It often is someone SIMPLY BEING AVAILABLE to do God's work where they are needed.

You don't have to wait for a sign, you can volunteer for ministry.

## What are the qualifications of a missionary?

Consider the Biblical Qualifications for a Pastor

- 1 Timothy 3
- Titus 1

Most traditional missionaries must live up to the qualifications of pastoral leadership. This includes missionaries who are church planters and pastors. But this isn't the only type of missionary work.

## Types of Missionaries

### The Pioneer Church Planter and Pastor

This is by far the most common missionary type. This person is consumed with the mission to make disciples around the world and they understand that God's chosen method to make disciples is through starting local churches in places where there are none at this time.

- These missionaries can be stateside or in foreign countries.
  - The Woodfin's - Missionaries to San Francisco
  - The Kennedy's - Missionaries to the Czech Republic
  - The Houser's - Missionaries to the Philippines

### Para-Church Missionaries

Many ministers serve in less traditional ways in order to reach niche groups or serve a specific purpose.

- Dare for More Ministries - Reba Bowman
- CRU - Batcho Bordjadze
- Medical Missions Outreach - Joseph Wicks
- Posting the Gospel - Dan Bergman

### Missionary Support / Associate Ministers

God clearly calls others to fill a support role or come alongside of the pioneer missionaries. This provides opportunities for those with different gifts and abilities to participate in the gospel mission.

- Sarah Weidner - Missionary to Romania
- Bethany Dick - Missionary to the Philippines

## Sending

Most missionaries have a sending church that provides personal connection, support, and accountability for them while they are on the mission field.

*Romans 10:13-15*

*13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.*

*14 How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and **how shall they hear without a preacher?***

*15 And **how shall they preach, except they be sent?** as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!*

## What does a sending church do?

A sending church is vital to the success of a missionary. Here are a few of the roles a sending church plays in the life of the missionary.

- A sending church provides personal connection and relationship support.
- A sending church provides family and pastoral support.
- A sending church regularly visits its own sent missionaries. We are partners on a deeper level than others.
- A sending church is often the largest contributor for the missionary, providing a foundation for monthly support
- A sending church provides validation and acts as the main recommendation to other churches for support raising.

Once you believe God has called you or led you to pursue ministry and your church is behind you, this is only the beginning. There is much to do before you actually get to your ministry.

## Deputation + Preparation

Before a missionary can leave their career and jump into ministry, there must be a plan for how to support their mission. There are several ways to gain funding, the most common being deputation.

### Ways to Fund Your Ministry

**Deputation** - This is the most traditional way of support raising whereby the missionary sets aside time to become a full-time fundraiser, inviting support from churches and individuals.

- More details are below.

**Denominational Funding** - Some denominations or mission agencies already have funding for missionaries. In order to gain this funding, a missionary must qualify for their program and follow their requirements.

- NAMB - North American Mission Board
- IMB - International Mission Board

**Self-Funding/Bivocational** - God allows some individuals to be independently wealthy or to support their missionary work through their business efforts. This is a great option if you have this possibility. Bivocational ministers have a tremendous opportunity.

**Career Missions Work** - Some para-church organizations have already funded budgets and you could find yourself serving in ministry while receiving a salary from the organization you serve with.

## Selecting a Mission Board

A mission board is an organization created for the financial accountability and success of missionaries serving around the world. There are many mission boards to choose to partner with. This is a major decision for most missionaries.

### Considerations for Choosing a Mission Board:

- **What services do they provide?**
  - Donor Services - Financial Accountability and Record Keeping
  - Emergency Assistance
  - Training and Resources
  - Financial Support and Retirement Training
  - Training for Missionary Kids
  - Fundraising Assistance - Church Directories, Budget formation, Coaching
  - Counseling Services + Crisis Care
- **What is the cost to the missionary?**
  - Examples
    - ABWE - Association of Baptists for World Evangelism - Full Service
      - All **donations are subject to a 2.5% financial services charge** and each career missionary contributes **\$250 a month** toward the cost of the services and resources they receive as a member of the ABWE family.
    - Central Missionary Clearinghouse
      - \$3/transaction
    - Others Include
      - BEMA - Baptist Evangelistic Missionary Association
      - BBFI - Baptist Bible Fellowship International
      - BIMI - Baptist International Missions Inc.
- **What are the requirements for the missionary?**
  - Level of Accountability
    - Frequency of reporting to churches
    - Financial recordkeeping
    - Budget and financial controls in place

## Deputation

Deputation is the most traditional way of support raising whereby the missionary sets aside time to become a full-time fundraiser, inviting support from churches and individuals.

### What does deputation Look Like?

- Average Missionary Deputation
  - 104,429 miles logged
  - 551 fast food meals eaten
  - 156 churches visited, resulting in 59 supporters.
  - 3,686 estimated phone calls made to setup appointments with pastors

- 39 months = average amount of time to reach full support = 3 years 3 months

## **Understanding Deputation and Missionary Life on the Road**

- Most missionaries begin deputation as a full-time job.
  - Loss of income
  - Living by faith
- Scheduling ministries and meeting with pastors becomes a full-time job.
  - Your livelihood depends on your ability to schedule meetings.
  - You must build your faith in God's ability to provide.
- Deputation is both a blessing and a hardship on missionary families.
  - Raising kids on the road is hard.
  - This becomes a sharpening and faith-building time as God provides and as you share your burden with churches.
- The Schedule of Deputation
  - Meetings, meetings, meetings. - Missionaries work to schedule church meetings on Sunday mornings, evenings, and Wednesday nights.
  - In between church meetings missionaries are scheduling coffee and lunch appointments with other local pastors.
  - Missionaries are also attending conferences and ministry meetings to make new contacts.
  - Mornings are spent making calls, and preparing mailings for churches.
    - Missions boards provide software to locate potential partner churches.
- Lodging on Deputation
  - Missionaries spent this 1-3 years in a variety of accommodations.
    - Hotels provided by hosting churches.
    - Camper/Trailer - temporary housing to allow for a consistent living space on the road
    - Missions Housing - church owned housing allowing for traveling missionaries to stay.

# **Starting**

Once fundraising is about 80% complete, missionaries will already have their sights set on leaving for the field. Here are a few next steps missionaries face at this point of the process.

## **Moving Plans**

- Missionaries face the difficult task of selling their home, and getting rid of all of their material possessions that cannot be relocated with them.
- This often involves living with family or living in some other temporary housing until moving day.
- Tickets must be purchased and living arrangement must be made in their field of service.

## **Language School**

- Depending on your field of service language school may be necessary.
- Most often language plays a major part in the first year on the field.
- This may be provided by the mission board.

## **How does a missionary start?**

- A big part of starting is simply learning to live successfully in a new place and culture.

- Many missionaries begin by serving alongside a current veteran missionary as they learn the language and get started in ministry.
- Examples:
  - Kennedys - Moving to the Czech Republic is a major change.
    - Year one + two - moving in, making friends, beginning a Bible study in their home.
    - Now - As of August, found a building and beginning a new church!
  - Cottrells - Thailand
    - Year one + two - working with veteran missionaries on the field.
    - Now - Continuing to preach and teach in these ministries. Assisting with a church plant.
    - Veteran missionary, Ricky Salmon has Multiple Myeloma.

## Continuing in Ministry

### Furlough

Missionaries will plan to take a "furlough" after several years on the field.

Furlough includes:

- Traveling to see supporters to give in-person updates and be encouraged.
- Very similar to deputation. Can range from 1 month to more than a year.

### Communication with Supporters

Missionaries will communicate regularly with supporters through the following means:

- Quarterly or Monthly Newsletters
- Email Updates
- Facebook Groups for Private Posts

## Missions at the Local Church

Missions at this local church include three functions: sending, supporting, and praying

Sending

- We train disciples to go out into ministry.
- We send missionary teams to serve on the field.

Supporting

- We give money monthly to Faith Promise to support current missionaries.
- We communicate regularly with our missionary partners.

Praying

- We support our missionaries by praying for them regularly