

The Tentmakers Motivation

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Why do we have a paper on motivation for living and working in another culture? Because our applicants' motivations for working abroad are of concern to us because our motivation is to see Jesus Christ made known to unevangelized peoples. We are not an employment service but a missions ministry.

Our high priority is countries that do not admit formal Christian missionaries, like Morocco, China, Saudi Arabia, Vietnam and Bhutan, and largely unevangelized open countries like Japan, Spain, Portugal, France, Italy and Austria, etc.

Non-believers in many countries can best be won by tentmakers—by Christians who support themselves in their trades and professions, in the way that Paul supported himself making and repairing tents. They do not go as regular missionaries—religious workers on donor support. Today's tentmakers may be engineers, nurse educators, computer experts, physics professors, entomologists, builders, English language teachers—or any one of hundreds of vocations.

Because they are Christians, they also make Jesus Christ known, integrating work and witness on the job, and sharing the good news also with neighbors in their free time.

Since 1984 we have assisted missions-committed Christians to find secular opportunities abroad—salaried positions, expense-paid voluntary service, study abroad, internships, exchanges and fellowships. Some have started businesses.

No tentmaker should work alone. We encourage everyone to become part of a tentmaker team or fellowship, or a field partner with a mission agency. We help applicants find or form teams at home or join teams already at work in their target country.

Age makes a difference. It matters whether a young person seeks a vacation missionary experience or whether a more mature person is looking for serious, longer term employment. We will look at some of the most frequently given reasons for working abroad, and then consider what is adequate primary motivation, why it matters to us and what difference it can make for you.

I Reasons for living abroad

Here are a few of the motives people have given for living in another culture.

1. Short-term missionary experience

Some just want vacation service to see if they can do it. The trial period is too short and the reason wrong. We don't go abroad because we can do it, but because we have a God who is able to make us able to do it. But others want to go for only a year or two because their long range goals are to do doctoral studies in the U.S., or to become pastors or Bible teachers. They want some first-hand experience in missions. We will never finish world evangelization without long-term commitments, yet even short-termers can win local people to the Lord. In my three years in Peru, God helped me win several people, and to begin a university student group, which has grown into a very large, vital movement. For Jim, three years was enough to start a house church of new converts. For Dan, a linguistics professor, five years was enough to do a translation of the New Testament into the language of five million Muslims who had never had it before.

Also, the short-termer's own life may be radically changed. Those who return home become much better senders—giving and praying and promoting missions. A pastoral couple who have done short terms abroad are likely to develop a missions-oriented church.

Art Beals runs a large short-term program in his church in Seattle, because participants come home eager to befriend and evangelize internationals in their own neighborhoods. Also, most people who now serve long-term abroad, as tentmakers or missionaries, made their decision to do so during a short term. One to three years is a great way to start.

2. A job transfer overseas

A pleasant, middle-aged couple came to our GO office to ask us about tentmaking in Saudi Arabia. His corporation asked him to go head up their operation in that difficult Muslim country. They had never considered missions for themselves, but now saw God's hand in this new assignment. They had a long record of significant ministry in their church, home and workplace—just the right kind of people to send abroad. A job transfer can constitute a call from God!

3. Travel and adventure

When I left to teach in the South America of 1954, I was afraid. It was not the modern continent it has become. It was my first international travel. In a way it was exciting—to see so many things and places that were of interest to me. I enjoyed learning about many exotic plants and animals. I enjoyed seeing the wild llama herds high up in the snow-peaked Andes and the playful fresh-water porpoises in a jungle lake. But the glamour wore off.

My work involved much travel during all my 21 years abroad. I didn't like crossing the Andes in an unpressurized prop plane, nor landing in a Brazilian airport at night where rows of tiny tar pots along the dirt runways substituted for electric lights! I never again want to experience an emergency landing in the Amazonian rain forest, and I prefer not to share my hotel room with a dozen large tarantula spiders.

But I learned first-hand about God's constant protection and to trust him in all the unpredictable travel.

Southern Europe had its inconveniences, too, because at that time I was limited to low fare trains and borderline lodging. But I loved history, and art history was a hobby, and I think it pleased God to see my enjoyment of the fabulous art museums.

But none of the adventure could have kept me in five countries through 21 years of culture shock and culture fatigue, hard work and long absences from my family! I stayed because I knew God wanted me there, and because I had learned to love the people.

But I remember Janet and Sue, who took teaching positions in Brazil because they wanted the adventure of exotic travel. But they had enough of that in just a few weeks. The romance was gone and their contract still had 605 days to go! They had no spiritual motivation, and no Christian sense of responsibility and personal integrity. Both went home in mid-year, without notice or apology to the school. They just failed to return.

But travel and tourism has value for missions. Young people who travel in several countries have better information for making a long-term commitment. Sharon visited relatives in Switzerland and Costa Rica, then did short terms in Greece and Japan. Then she married Ed who had done Peace Corps in Burkina Faso. They went to Japan as tentmakers, with two small sons.

Couples with no overseas travel often give up missions because they fear for their children, while experienced travelers are less apprehensive. Tourism is easy. But when you begin living in a country, you start bumping against brick walls, and you need strong reasons to stay on.

4. Culture and Language learning.

Some people have already studied a language and want a chance to use it, while others want to learn a language and culture on location. They may attend a language school or hire a private tutor. Often they live with a local family or in an apartment among local people. Some use the excellent Lamp Method for language and culture learning. As you acquire sentence frames and vocabulary, you have to constantly practise them with local people, so you develop friendships.

How could you care about your new local friends and not tell them about the Lord? That desire can add incentive for language learning.

Why not go as a study abroad tentmaker, even as you prepare for future work and ministry? We have been able to get quite a few students into Christian student teams who learn cross-cultural campus evangelism abroad under the leadership of experienced campus workers.

5. Professional experience

With the globalization of business it is now difficult to earn an MBA (or a variety of other degrees) without overseas experience and proficiency in a foreign language. Internships enable upper division students to earn modestly abroad while they gain experience. It enhances later job acquisition, and is ideal for those who hope to be longer term tentmakers in a needy country. But they will need stronger motivation than work experience even to get them through their initial stint. It is important that they should put Jesus Christ first.

6. Cross-cultural experience for the family

Parents want their children to have the broadening experience of living in another country. Children who attend bilingual, bicultural schools, become highly enriched individuals. Often they are privileged members of a small elite expatriate community. Study in local national schools can do even more to expand children's horizons, make them tolerant and appreciative of people who are different from themselves. And they learn a foreign language.

They can also observe missionaries in action. But family experience is not sufficient motivation, and it can pall without a deeper reason for staying.

7. To earn money

Is earning money a wrong reason for going abroad? Not unless it is wrong to earn a living at home. If it is right to earn a good living for one's family at home, it must be right to do so in another country. Many positions pay much higher salaries than at home, with generous benefits, providing the applicant has strong qualifications. But by itself earning big pay is not adequate motivation. As family members experience culture shock and culture fatigue, even good contracts are broken.

But I always say there is nothing spiritual about a low salary if a high one is available for the same work! Craig's starting salary in an Asian country was \$38,000, and he had no debts and no dependents. He used most of his earnings for missions.

Joe and Jane both had high salaries in the Middle East, so they were able to contribute to the support of several missionaries in other countries.

We recommend some jobs in certain countries to help young graduates to quickly work off their school debts. Ralph Winter wrote that debts are one of the biggest obstacles to getting young people into missions. Earlier generations who did not have affluent parents either had to work their way through school with part-time jobs, or forego higher education. But today educational loans are available for almost everyone, so academic institutions constantly raise tuition and campus living costs.

Few students realize how long it may take them to repay their debts, especially if their degrees are not highly marketable. Mission agencies usually will not accept applicants until their debts are paid, since donors are not eager to contribute to this expense.

Pete and Cindy both graduated in education, with a joint \$20,000 debt. But they took positions in an Arab Gulf country where they had high salaries and a relatively low cost of living. A disciplined, modest lifestyle enabled them to work off the total debt in one and a half years! Another couple currently work in Japan to pay their joint school debts.

On the other hand, we know older couples who worked abroad to earn enough to build a house. Some sought to increase their retirement provision.

In fact, all tentmakers must make their own retirement provisions, and many expatriate salaries are established with this in mind.

But when making these kinds of financial provisions for oneself and one's family, why not consider doing them in a country where you can also advance the kingdom of God? All the people mentioned above had Jesus Christ in first place in their lives, so they were excited about evangelizing their host country residents. Some have continued to serve for years.

8. To help the poor

Some of our applicants wanted to help rural people with their agriculture or health care, or small business development, or slum people in the cities. This is a great reason for going abroad, and it fulfills our cultural mandate (Gen. 1:28).

But it is good only if it is kept in right perspective. We must integrate it with our missionary mandate—to make Jesus Christ known. Social work can be thankless unless people's hearts are changed. I remember when the Brazilian government moved Rio de Janeiro slum dwellers to pleasant new housing in a new residential development. In a few months it was all trashed. To get the people out of the slums you have to get the slums out of the people. Only Jesus Christ can do that by giving them hope and a new sense of their true identity and worth.

10. Unemployment

A few years ago when the price of imported oil shot from \$2 to \$30 a barrel, Western countries were thrown into crisis. Capable employees were laid off in droves. At the same time, the oil-rich countries used their petrodollars to bring their infrastructure from the Dark Ages to modern standards almost overnight! To do this they needed massive technical and professional help from abroad. A single firm would place full-page ads for personnel in major newspapers. One corporation hired 300 engineers at once!

Many Christians came to us for help in getting these overseas jobs—only because they could not find work at home. Unemployment is not the highest motivation for going abroad, but God is willing to begin even with that—if they are people who love him.

Where we were convinced the applicant had a personal relationship with God, a good knowledge of the Bible, and some ministry experience, we recommended or provided additional training and helped them go. We also put them in touch with tentmakers already serving in their target country. Many of these people grew in their motivation and ended up making long-term commitments to missions.

If you are unemployed, maybe God is gently nudging you to another country.

11. To save a shaky marriage

Spouses in a troubled marriage often think that a complete change of scenery will give them a new start. But culture shock and culture fatigue invariably exacerbate the problems. Even good marriages fall apart under culture stress and new temptations. It is a costly illusion!

A troubled couple who came to Spain, attended church, and lived together in the same house (each had half), but refused to speak to each other. Their presence was negative.

People also come because their children have problems. Several families moved to South America for a few months so their unmarried, pregnant daughters could give birth and then return to their U.S. high schools, without anyone knowing.

Others wanted to get their children off of drug habits. But living abroad can exacerbate teen problems. Drugs are as available in many countries as they are at home, with one difference. Penalties can be much more severe—like years in dungeon-like prisons.

Mission agencies and secular employers seek people with strong marriages and well-adjusted families.

12. To escape the U.S.

A few years ago when U.S.-bashing was a popular sport, we received applications from a few young people eager to leave our unjust society for a nicer one. But individuals who cannot adjust to their own culture stand little chance of adjusting to a different one. Besides, you soon realize that the grass is not greener on the other side of the ocean.

The U.S. can look rather good from a tiny unheated apartment in an icy cold Beijing winter, with a daily diet of rice and cabbage, or from a hot, noisy flat in Cairo with fine sand covering everything you touch.

We look for people who like their homeland, and have a good perspective on its good and bad points, because they will most easily learn to enjoy their new host country. People often express their culture shock, either by finding everything much worse than at home, or finding everything better. It is important to appreciate the good and try to understand reasons for the bad.

In conclusion, All the above may be valid secondary reasons for working abroad except for the last two. But a Christian's primary motive at home and in other spiritually needy countries must be to make Jesus Christ known!

II Primary motivation

1. Advantages of clear goals. It takes firm motivation to keep you abroad and to keep your perspective right through innumerable frustrations.

Imagine needing 23 signatures on a rental contract, or two trips to the bank for the simplest transaction, or having electricity and running water only a few hours a day. In an advanced country like Japan, every activity is restricted by a myriad of social rules, like the right ways to bow in different situations, and 26 different kinds of gift giving, each with a different kind of reciprocation!

In an affluent Muslim culture, liberated, articulate Beth had to wear long, loose gowns, keep every wisp of hair covered, walk a few steps behind her husband, never speak in the presence of men, and eat in the kitchen after serving her husband and his male guests in the living room!

But if you put sharing Jesus Christ first, you learn to love the local people, so you have trouble leaving when it is time to go. Your life and ministry become the most exciting adventure in the world! Each conversion sets off ripples that never stop as their converts win yet others! It makes every sacrifice worthwhile!

2. Priorities. What should be the order of our priorities in a needy world?

1) The glory of God—the reputation of Jesus Christ in the world must be our highest goal, because all that we are and have we owe to him as our Creator. And we owe our eternal life and glorious future to Jesus Christ for his incarnation and crucifixion for us. He must be proclaimed so that everyone everywhere will respond with worship, praise, thanksgiving, love, trust and obedience. (Acts 1:18ff)

Paul said his missionary work was "completing what was lacking in the suffering of Jesus Christ." (Col.1:24-29) What good was Jesus' suffering if only a few thousand people ever heard of it? So God's reputation must be our highest priority.

2) The kingdom of God. Jesus said, "Seek first the kingdom of God"—its extension in the world—and all else will be provided. (Mt. 6:3) He taught us to pray, "Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. . ." Church planting is important because the church is God's main instrument for winning the world. Individual Christians matter, but none can give a complete witness to God's grace. It takes several Christians together to express the mutual love and care and forgiving, etc. that are essentials of our corporate witness. The local church is where the world should see a colony of heaven demonstrating God's kingdom.

3) Winning lost, spiritually dead people to Jesus Christ. It should matter to us that all people, rich or poor, are eternally doomed if they do not have Jesus Christ in them through his Spirit. We should take the gospel to them in a context of friendship and caring about their other problems and needs. A great book that describes the spiritual situation in every country is Operation World. (See bibliography.)

3. Motivating Scriptures

What has motivated me for many years is God's purpose for human history. God created earth for human beings, his highest creation—people made in his image! He was pleased with the environment he had made for them, with its plants and animals, and he had a long-range plan for our planet and the people he created on it. He put them in charge of it. (Gen. 1:28, Psa. 8). They were to populate the earth, to develop it (agriculture, science, fine arts, etc.), and to govern it—all under his direction—as his vice-regents.

But they fell for the trickery of God's archenemy and betrayed God's world into enemy hands. In doing so, they also came under his domination. (Gen.3) Death, which was already in the plant and animal world, now entered the human race. (Rom. 5:12) God doesn't punish us for Adam and Eve's sin, but the death in them passed genetically to all their descendants, giving them a propensity to sin.

In Genesis 3:15 we have God's declaration of war between his forces and those of Satan. The second person of the Trinity was already engaged in battles throughout the Old Testament, like those at the time of the Exodus and the Exile.

But a new phase began when God himself entered human history as Jesus Christ. (Phil.2:5-11, John 1:1-4, 14) Even he referred to the devil as "the ruler of this world." But Jesus spoke of his own death and resurrection as the defeat of Satan. (John 12:32, Col.2:13-15) Jesus not only paid for our sins, so we could be made spiritually alive, but he also triumphed over all principalities and powers—the enemy and all his human and non-human accomplices! He won the war! There is no question about the outcome!

But as in most wars, there is still much fighting to consolidate the victory. Paul says "Jesus Christ must reign until all his enemies are subdued under his feet." (1 Cor. 15:25ff) He is on the throne! All power has been given to him! He has a name which is above every name! (Mt.28:18-20, Eph. 1:20-23) We participate in his present indirect reign through his church. Our present job is to occupy the kingdoms of the world that are his by right of creation and by right of purchase. It is no use taking territory in war if there are no occupying troops to hold it. So we must go to each country and reconcile the rebels. We use no force, but loving persuasion. Human regimes kill off the rebels—as in Soviet Russia, Cambodia, etc. But our king is not willing that any should perish. (2 Pet. 3:9) He loves all the rebels out there, as he loved us while we were still his enemies. (Rom. 5:8) So he sends us out to lovingly tell people there is a war on, that there are only two kings, and one is an imposter out to destroy them. We tell them there is still time to change sides, but they must do so on the King's terms—unconditional surrender. (2 Cor. 5:14f, Lk. 14:25-35.)

God's purpose for human history is to unite, to reconcile everything to himself again—all that was lost in the Garden—and then to proceed with his eternal plans. (Col.1:19, Eph. 1:9, 10) He saves all the people he can—and glorifies us for eternity! But even the messed up plant and animal world is groaning, waiting for our transformation, when all of it will also be transformed, as God remakes a new earth out of our destroyed old earth! (2 Pet.3:1, Rev. 21:1, Rom. 8:18-23) Surely C.S. Lewis is right in concluding that we will never be less than we are now, but more, and our planet will never be less than it is now, but more! What a future awaits us!

I love to tell the story of Jesus to people who do not know it. When they hear how Jesus paid for our sins and forgives us and makes us his children, I watch their eyes so I won't miss the moment when they first grasp the truth. It is overwhelming! They think they have misunderstood because what I have said is too good to be true.

It motivates me that all who do not hear the gospel are damned. (Rom. 3:23, 6:23) A third of this planet's people have not heard the name of Jesus! Another third does not know what that name means. After 2000 years! Without the gospel they are doomed. God is not obligated to save anyone but he saves all he can. He trusted us—thought we would be so grateful that we would spread the news. Everything else pales in comparison.

When I first went overseas I had one overriding goal. When Jesus was on earth he could go where he wanted, like the time he chose the route through Samaria to reach one needy woman and her townspeople. (John 4) But today he resides within us and is limited to going where we take him. So Paul says, "I beg you to present your body as a living sacrifice—one that can walk and talk! (Rom. 12:1, 2) In Romans 6 he specifies members of our bodies." Our eyes to see needy people, ears to hear their words, hands to show practical kindness, lips to speak comfort and good news. Then Paul quotes God's words from Isaiah, "How beautiful are the feet of those who take the gospel!" (Rom. 10:15)

When I first went abroad, to Peru, I wanted to bring Jesus Christ in me face to face with people he longed to win to himself. I began to do that a few hours after my arrival. At the reception the school board gave for new teachers I met Marta and the conversation turned to spiritual things. She began coming over for Bible study, and a few weeks later invited Jesus Christ into her life! Then another teacher found God. Then several of my 6th graders and a couple of my high school students, then several university students friends.

Ever since—more than 40 years and 6 countries later—I consciously bring people face to face with Jesus and then tell them about him. This continues to motivate me and to give me joy!

III What makes overseas work different?

Why can't you just get a job overseas like you would in the U.S., without our scrutiny of your motivation? You can. No one can stop you. But you should not do so because of the fierce war going on for control of the world and the fact that you are in the thick of it, simply because you are a Christian. Like it or not.

It is a cosmic war involving human and non-human forces. Most of the world today is hotly contested territory, conquered by Jesus Christ, but still occupied by the enemy. He will not easily concede it, and you represent the enemy. You are going into a war zone. Into enemy territory. It is foolish to go without your full armor, without training, and without other troops.

Not all tentmakers need officer training, but they all need to know what the war is about, the tactics of the enemy and how to use our only weapon—the sword of God's Word! (Eph. 6:10-18) You don't have the option of just doing your job and not getting involved in the spiritual battles. In wartime, even inaction is a kind of action—it is helping the other side, according to Jesus in Mt. 12:30.

Christians should not thoughtlessly move to a non-Christian country, unaware of the power of spiritual darkness. Because you are a Christian your going to a hostile country has enormous implications. You become more conscious of malevolent powers. You will be surprised at the superstition, even of educated people. When I was in India, university science professors argued that the highly polluted Ganges River water is pure enough to drink, untreated, because everyone knows the river is holy! You almost certainly will encounter some demonism. You may not be able to distinguish the demonic from the merely physical, but the victim usually knows the difference.

You may say that the U.S. is hardly a country of saints! True. But you have to be in a genuinely non-Christian culture to appreciate the fact that even with all our crime and encroaching paganism, we still live off the capital of our Christian roots. It makes an enormous difference when 20% of your population are practising evangelicals. There is a restraining power. About 95% of Americans claim to believe in a personal God. But it is shocking how our government, our education system and the media have forced our personal beliefs into our private lives, eliminating public truth, in the name of secularism. It is propagated as religiously neutral, when it is actually a pernicious anti-God religion.

Most of Western Europe is already even more neo-pagan than America, and the Mediterranean countries and Austria have a lesser percentage of evangelicals than India or China. Europe is being altered also by huge numbers of Muslim, Hindu and Buddhist immigrants. France has more Muslims than Christians.

But a solidly Muslim culture feels more oppressive than a secularized, nominal Christian one. But the sense of spiritual darkness is even stronger in a Hindu or Buddhist culture, where few acknowledge a personal Creator God.

You become more vulnerable to satanic attack because you are invading enemy territory. Even if you were not actively witnessing to people, Satan would want to disable you, because of your potential for God.

Your spiritual life is never stationary even in the US or in countries that are spiritually like ours—Norway, New Zealand, etc. If you are not serving and growing, you are inexorably sliding backward. That is why we are commanded not to neglect to meet together for mutual prayer and care (Heb. 10:24,25)

If you go to a hostile country you may find little to keep your spiritual life alive. Religious meetings may be against the law and you will meet in clandestine little house fellowships, where Christians like yourself encourage each other. Even secularized Americans often identify themselves as Christians once they see the darkness of a truly non-Christian society. They begin asking about God and coming to meetings.

We could tell you about Christians who did not make it. Some fell into sin in the incredible moral cesspool of the expatriate community—in a country like Saudi Arabia, where many married people work at single status jobs, while their spouses remain in their home country. Soon everyone is sleeping with everyone. Homosexuals go after these overseas jobs because of the large concentration of unaccompanied males. The English-language international school in Riyadh will hire only teaching couples, because single women soon learn they can earn more money as mistresses to the sheiks than they can teaching.

Many jobs in Saudi Arabia, and in most other countries, are family status. But the wives are often not employed and are bored. Marriages fall apart. One sincere Christian woman lost her perspective and married a non-believer and then became mentally ill.

But let me add that with a strong relationship with Jesus Christ you can go into the darkest milieu, win people to the Lord, and come out victorious, because "greater is he who is in you than he that is in the world!" (1 Jn. 4:4, 5:4,5) No one can touch you without God's permission! See our GO Papers on The Tentmaker's Academic, Cultural and Spiritual Preparation.

Properly prepared, expatriate families can live rich, happy lives even in the most difficult countries. The situation may be even more wholesome for their children than in the U.S.

IV Why your motivation matters to us

Aren't applicants' motivations their own business? They become our business for the following reasons:

1. We owe it to you and your family. We care! We want our applicants to make a good cultural adjustment in their new host country, to enjoy their stay, to grow spiritually and to have a fruitful ministry for Jesus Christ. We want them to be prepared for what they will encounter.
2. We owe it to your overseas employer. He may not be interested in your faith, but he deserves a person who can make a cultural adjustment and do effective work. U.S. firms abroad report a 30% failure rate of their American personnel, at an average cost of \$100,000 to \$300,000 per broken contract! Other expatriates just mark time until the contract is over, because they or their family members are unable to make a cultural adjustment, for lack of motivation. Neither kind of failure is an option for Christians. (Col. 3:22-24, Eph.6:5-10)

Peace Corps withholds a large percentage of their recruits' pay until the end of their 27 month contract, to encourage completion. Still 30 percent drop out before the end.

Many expats who go abroad have as little association with the local people as possible. They live in the expat golden ghetto—every major city has one. They make little effort to learn the language or culture, so they are uncomfortable and count the days until they can return home.

3. We owe it to the tentmakers already in your target country. The tentmaker fellowships and teams in restrictive countries expect us to refer only strongly missions-motivated people, who will be a positive addition and not a drain on them. The few Christians there are already overtaxed trying to win the local people.

In open countries, of course, you usually have an international English language church, but it may not be warmly evangelical.

Non-Christians think all Westerners are Christians because they were born into Christendom. They get their idea of the Christian faith from our Western TV and movies! This gives Christians a bad reputation. Tentmakers inform the people in their host countries that most Westerners are not true Christians. But it is extremely important that all who claim to be Christians should be characterized by caring, holy living. We dare not send people who can hinder the efforts or confuse the testimony of the committed, by bad relationships or an ungodly lifestyle.

4. We owe it to the mission agency or tentmaker fellowship that you may seek to join. Everyone should be in a fellowship and accountability group. All of these groups expect us to share their high standards. All will want to know your main motivation. You need a conviction that God wants you to live and work in your new host country. This conviction is what mission leaders refer to as God's call. It means you have sensed God leading you as you have taken steps toward going abroad.

5. We owe it to our donor-partners. Their gifts make our GO ministry to you possible. The fees we charge do not cover the costs of our service. Our donors expect that their sacrificial giving will result in more tentmakers giving the gospel to people who have never heard it. Anyone who wants to go overseas is free to do so, but we are not free to use our resources unless applicants share our missionary goals.

6. We owe it to our hard-working GO staff, who are willing to expend sacrificial time and energy to help missions-committed applicants to go overseas, but are not so willing to serve people whose presence abroad might be spiritually counterproductive.

7. We owe it to the Lord. He has given us a job to do and we seek to do it responsibly. Anyone who wants to go overseas can do so. But we have no business facilitating their going if they are not ready or if they might frustrate the efforts of genuine tentmakers. A Christian's presence in an unevangelized country is never neutral.

V What right motivation can mean for you

Right motivation is closely linked to a strong conviction of God's will that is sometimes referred to as a call. It is no mysterious experience, no dream or vision, but a growing conviction that comes as you investigate and prayerfully evaluate options, and as you seek to prepare. You become convinced God wants you to go. As you move in that direction, he gives small confirmations, inconclusive in themselves, but with convincing cumulative effect. Later, when you are tempted to throw in the towel and fly home this conviction of God's leading will keep you steady. (See GO Paper on Guidance: Understanding God's Will.)

This conviction will help you survive the problems that arise. You will have problems abroad, just as you have them at home, because problems are a part of life—the way our faith is refined and proven to be genuine. Somehow they loom

larger in a strange land without family and old friends and one's home church. But problems are the best way to know God's power and care first-hand, not just by hearsay. Your testimony is usually strongest in suffering, because anyone can do right when everything is going well.

Your missions motivation will help you to develop friendships with the local people, to communicate with them. As you work and socialize together, you develop a deep appreciation for them, and it makes any amount of effort and sacrifice worthwhile.

In spite of difficulties, your life in another culture can be enjoyable and rewarding and safe, even in the most hostile countries. No one can touch you or your loved ones without God's permission! God always takes your children into account because he loves them even more than you do.

And you are hardly joining a losing cause! Don't worry about reports that church members are dropping out in Europe at a rapid rate. These are nominal Christians tired of paying taxes for state churches. But evangelical churches in Europe and everywhere else are growing rapidly. Faster than any other religion! In Latin America they are growing about three times as fast as the population, and in sub-Sahara Africa about five times as fast! Some missionary receiving countries have now joined us as sending countries! We have better information about cultures than ever before. Some think we can actually see the finishing line in this race! Most important, our momentum is growing.

V Ways to sharpen your motivation

1. Learn about your target country. Operation World is an excellent help. It can also help you discern where God wants you to go.
2. Get newsletters from a few missionaries and pray for them.
3. Read missionary magazines, on the region of the world that most interests you, like west Africa, the Arab world, or eastern Europe, or a kind of service that interests you, like aviation, community development, literacy, etc. (Call GO for suggestions.)
4. Read missionary books. Your church library may have some. See the brief bibliography below. Missionary biographies are helpful.
5. Take Perspectives, an excellent short missions training course, now given all across the U.S., at convenient hours for working people.
6. Read the Bible, seeking all that it says about missions.
7. Get to know immigrants from other countries. You might be able to give help—even tutor English. Learn about their country and religion. If possible, start a Bible study with one or more.

In conclusion, remember that "God so loved the world (not just Christians) that he gave his only begotten Son" Share his love for this lost world and his concern to win its rebels. Help destroy the works of the devil. Advance God's plan to remake our planet, transforming even the plant and animal world, to make this a perfect, eternal residence, where he can dwell forever among his redeemed people!

—Ruth E. Siemens

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