

The Tentmakers Preparation

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Here we will consider what preparation they need—a checklist. Christians who are just beginning their education may want to incorporate most of it, while people in mid-career may need only pieces to upgrade their training.

Tentmaker preparation

We could talk about secular and spiritual training. But, although we often use these terms, we should not divide life into these categories. Because we belong to Jesus Christ, all that we do becomes a spiritual matter. God cares about how we study lit or history or calculus and how we do our paid job at the supermarket or car wash, and later, our accounting, chemistry teaching, pediatric medicine, office management or housing construction.

Whatever we consciously do for God becomes worship! This has inevitable consequences in us and in the people around us, and can turn even hard or boring study or work into an adventure!

If you wish to do tentmaking, some of your preparation will be formal—college classes for credit. Some will be non-formal, like your student teaching or a forestry internship, and some informal—what you read or pick up by experience. Your religious training will also include all three kinds.

This paper outlines the kinds of training needed for tentmaking and suggests ways to obtain it. But how and when to fit in the pieces is ultimately up to each prospective tentmaker.

When should you begin? How about yesterday? In fact, you may be confident God has already been building the right pieces into your life! You need to prepare now to be the most useful to God no matter where you will go. Some of the same basic training is needed whether you will serve him as a missionary or tentmaker overseas, or as a witness and "sender" at home. The training will enhance your present ministry on campus!

In fact, the best preparation for the next step in our lives is always to be faithful in what God has assigned us to do now in the circles in which we currently move: family, neighborhood, campus and workplace. Mt. 25:21- 23.

The tentmaker's work

1. Choosing a vocation.

Your vocation matters. On a bad day a middle-aged dentist said, "What right did that 18-year-old kid have to decide that I should spend my life as a dentist?" Present choices have consequences. No vocation is perfect—all have advantages and disadvantages.

All involve work. The difference between work and play is not the amount of energy expended, but the fact that we play when and how we want to, and we work to fulfil a commitment when we feel like it and when we do not.

But work is not a consequence of sin. God designed it before the revolt in the garden, and he pronounced it good. Six days of work are as important as the one day of rest, and all seven belong to God. Work is one way we fulfil our cultural mandate (Gen. 1:28), one way we can care for our earth, one way we can demonstrate God's love for people. Work is also our main context for witness.

Young graduates often make job changes, looking for work that is fulfilling. But few jobs can bring fulfillment to us. It comes through what we bring to the job—our motivation. Paul says we should serve our employer with the same care and enthusiasm we would show if he were Jesus Christ! That rule held even when the worker was a slave and the boss a harsh master! Win your colleagues and let your collective testimony convert the boss! If you do your job for God and with his help, even a hard or boring job becomes spiritual ministry. But it does not take the place of telling the gospel.

So ask God to help you choose your vocation. Get information on a variety of careers during your first two years of college. Get vocational testing and guidance counseling. (Your college probably provides this.) Talk to Christians in vocations that interest you.

Students should ask themselves: 1) What are my best aptitudes, gifts and interests? What do I like to do? What do I do well? Eric Liddell (Chariots of Fire), the Scottish world class runner who later died as a missionary in China, said, "I have to run because God made me fast." 2) What vocations are helpful in a needy world? 3) What skills are marketable in my target country? 4) What career will enable me to support a family, and make me marketable at home and abroad?

Excellent workbooks can help you plan for the future, like Life Planning by two Christian counselors, Farnsworth and Lawhead (IVP). Others help you work out your vocational profile.

If only one vocation is right for you, God will lead you into it. But he will usually let you choose because you can serve him equally well in various vocations.

If you are a senior or graduate and have already made your choices, do not assume you have made a mistake. You probably chose something compatible with your abilities and interests and those are good clues to a good choice.

About 50% of college graduates never work in their field. However, their training isn't wasted because skills overlap.

2. Vocations needed.

Governments issue work permits only to foreigners with expertise their country needs. About half of all positions open in the U.S. are in education at some level, from elementary school to university, and for most subjects. There is demand for high school math and science teachers. Also needed are professionals in teacher education, curriculum development, media technology, library science, etc. Other large categories are health care of every kind, engineering and technology, the sciences, agriculture and related rural specialties, business and finance, computer science, and transportation and tourism. There are fewer openings in the social sciences, athletics and the fine arts, etc. But we have helped quite a few people get jobs in these fields, also. There are even jobs in scuba diving!

See article International Job Market

About four million Americans work in other countries, with much turnover. There are at least 50,000 to 60,000 positions open at any one time. But it is still not easy to find an opening for which you qualify, with acceptable terms, in the desired location, at the right time! You have to make the effort to acquire information and trust God to guide you! GO can help.

Students should select solid majors, like physics, English literature, civil engineering, computers or nursing. Recent exotic majors, or majors that are too specialized, are not even recognized in other countries as valid degree subjects. Develop a specialty within a broad major. Get a degree in nursing and then specialize in ICU, supervision or nursing education. One of our applicants qualified only for mountain climbing. Possibilities were limited.

But a degree in physical education with a specialty in climbing would have been good. Openings for music therapy are scarce unless you also take occupational therapy or music education. The right double majors also enhance marketability but are not practical for everyone.

3. Are degrees needed?

Because countries import only expertise they lack, most positions require at least a bachelors degree. A masters degree improves your chances. Often a doctorate is required. The two-thirds world countries are often more degree-conscious than westerners. Sometimes, experience counts more than a degree. Plumbers, electricians, etc., are marketable if they are certified. The owner of a successful farm may not need a degree. Nor a professional diver. Nor an oil well driller with 15 years experience. Nor an ESL teacher.

Only mineral-rich or other affluent countries with low or moderate populations hire unskilled and semi-skilled workers. But they recruit these from poor countries. So a Westerner applying for such a job would be highly suspect—and unhappy with the pay and conditions.

4. Terms of employment.

Most positions for fully qualified people include round trip travel for the family, good salaries and health insurance. Some jobs provide housing and schooling for the children. However, many tentmakers take less well-paying positions if these are more conducive to the ministry they envision. But to take a minimal job that does not support your lifestyle undermines your credibility.

Yet every vocation is different. University teaching is often part-time, but foreign faculty either receive full pay from a foundation for teaching and research, or are permitted to earn half time as private consultants.

You usually get better terms if you acquire your job while still in your home country. Or go abroad to do job hunting before your employment at home ends. Otherwise people wonder if there is some sinister reason behind your unemployment and your desire to work abroad. Also, if you are hired while in a foreign country, you are usually considered a local hire and receive lower wages without benefits or international travel.

5. Work experience.

How much is needed? There are a few entry level jobs in many fields. But generally you need one to three years experience. We hesitate to help new teachers get first time positions abroad because if they have a rough first year they may give up teaching. But—it is possible to do student teaching abroad under qualified master teachers in English language schools.

How can you gain experience?

You have several options:

1) Do a work and study program. Ask your faculty adviser about the possibilities. Your employer gives you part-time practical experience in the field for which you are preparing. There are many patterns for combining or alternating work and study. By the time you graduate you are more marketable than other students, and you avoid the debt students often incur.

2) Seek a job after graduation, like 2 or 3 years in teaching or nursing. If you are in business, apply to corporations with overseas branches, and let them know you are interested in an eventual overseas assignment.

3) Seek a modestly paid internship abroad after your junior or senior year, with IAESTE, AIESEC, Carl Duisberg, Rotary or many others. Because business and most other vocations have been globalized, the number of internships abroad have increased. Some universities will not let you get an MBA without overseas experience. An internship gives you a start on a language and culture and looks great on a resume! Some internships turn into long-term employment. You can already do low-key evangelism in the context of an internship. 4) Serve with Peace Corps, in any one of 100 countries and several hundred careers. Half are in teaching. The head of the international staffing department of a multi-national corporation said they look for people who did Peace Corps and enjoyed it. Multinational corporations report a 30% failure rate among their expats. Each failure represents enormous expense. So they care not just whether you can do the job, but whether you can adjust to a foreign culture. Get GO's paper on Peace Corps if you are considering this option.

Mennonite Central Committee is another option that provides modestly paid work, and encourages evangelism as well. It was the first cross-cultural aid and development agency ever! Pres. Kennedy patterned Peace Corps after the MCC.

6. Language learning.

Must you learn a language? Many positions abroad can be done in English, because it is the world's trade language. Many other jobs require fluency in the local language. But even tentmakers who can work in English should get to work on a local language to enhance their own cultural adjustment, to gain the confidence of local people and to sensitively share the gospel. A start on the language gives you an advantage over other job seekers.

People who took a language in high school have a head start, regardless of which language. It will be useful and it will facilitate learning another one. If you know where God wants you to serve, try to take a relevant language in college, where you can use language labs, etc. Or buy language cassettes and books. Or find radio or TV programs in your target language. Or exchange English lessons for the language of an international student. Or do all four!

Once overseas, consulates provide classes or refer you to local language instructors. Employers often pay for lessons for the expatriate and his family.

It is ideal to learn the language and culture at the same time. The Brewsters' LAMP method helps you do that. This Christian couple wrote a book now used in many universities. You learn the phonetics of the language and some sentence frames, and then use them daily in real life situations to acquire new vocabulary and phrases.

The same language can vary so much from one country to another as to be almost unintelligible. Most Arabs cannot understand colloquial Egyptian. Jordanian Arabic is preferred because it is more classical. Costa Rican, Colombian or Peruvian Spanish are more acceptable than Argentine or Mexican. (Unless you will work in Argentina or Mexico.)

7. Finding employment. How do you find an overseas position?

You should begin this search about a year before your estimated departure date. We had a well-qualified civil engineer on his way to Saudi Arabia two weeks after he applied. But it usually takes longer.

a.) Your own college department may know of openings. b) Consult your professional journal for ads. c) You can do your own research in newspapers, magazines, the Internet and a variety of other sources. But you will probably find it too costly and time-consuming. Global Opportunities provides information on job openings through an Internet site and counseling in the job search process. GO does job referral, not placement, so you retain the initiative in contacting employers. GO also helps you evaluate your readiness for tentmaking, and makes available job and missions counseling, training, prefield orientation and liaison with tentmakers already in your target country. GO has experience in helping people go abroad since 1984.

It is usually costly and futile to apply to commercial overseas placement agencies. Most care only about executives and top paid professionals that provide them a significant financial cut. Most ask a considerable price up front and then take a substantial cut out of your first year's contract. By law, if you turn down three jobs they think you can fill, they are free of further obligation.

Not every job is suitable. Christians will want to ask many questions and be sure a job is conducive to the ministry they anticipate. Also, is the salary adequate for the cost of living? What benefits are included? Is there schooling for the children? Etc.

Networking is vital. Usually God is already preparing us for our next assignment as we fill our present one. So build relationships now with people around you and people you meet. Your college faculty often know about openings and can give references to overseas employers they know. I heard about my teaching position in Peru from a missionary couple.

Befriend international students! Bob Rutz, at the U. of Nebraska in the >50's, found himself surrounded by Iranian students, and he spent much of his time with them. It is no surprise that God led him to Iran as a tentmaker! There the students' wealthy parents treated him royally. The students later held important positions. These friendships opened all kinds of doors for Bob as he started several businesses!

8. Starting your own business.

Some tentmakers prefer to start their own businesses abroad. One couple started an English language school in Spain. A couple in Brazil opened a yarn shop with stitchery courses. One exported handmade rugs from North Africa. Several Christians design software applications for businesses in a Muslim country. A large construction engineering firm and a manufacturing firm—both run by Christians in the Middle East—have been vital witnesses for Jesus Christ. It is hard to overestimate the positive influence of a good business. It can demonstrate Christian values, provide jobs for needy people and bring hard currency into a country. But you usually need experience and some capital. Phantom businesses sooner or later bring shame on the name of Christ. Most Christians want their own business so they will have more time free and will be able to bring in more Christians tentmakers. But your own business usually takes far more hours than a salaried position and the government will expect you to train and hire local people. There are also problems of red tape, excessive taxation and in some countries, protection money to pay to mafia types. But we need more Christians who can start businesses in needy countries, and help local people to start them.

9. Additional practical skills.

Tentmakers should also have practical skills that are not job-related but enhance daily living. They will be fine if they live in Switzerland where everything works with the precision of a Swiss watch. But in the two-thirds world, only some things work some of the time. Many people learn practical skills growing up, but some miss out.

It depends on an attitude to life. At 12, Mark was a jack-of-all-trades, because he helped his do-it-yourself Dad make home improvements and do appliance repair. Before Don was old enough for a drivers license, he had already turned a junk car into an attractive, smooth-running vehicle! (And worn out his mother's driveway !) No wonder he went into the automotive business! (I know about Don because he was my little brother, and I financed his first car—total price: \$6!)

It used to be shameful if girls of marriageable age had not learned cooking, sewing, homemaking and child care— from their mothers. In today's feminist, politically correct world, many young women who have these skills are ashamed to admit it. You may be able to have household help overseas.

But hospitality is such a big part of a Christian's ministry that you should develop skill in cooking and baking (without mixes). Then it will be easier to improvise ingredients, learn foreign recipes and use an oven without a thermostat. (Take one with you!) I was so grateful that I had volunteered to help with quantity cooking in Inter Varsity Christian Fellowship conferences.

In most cultures, men and women must fill traditional male and female roles and the unisex model is offensive. Still, both men and women should learn something about building, home maintenance and auto repair.

Your skills can also help other people. Someone wrote from Tanzania that if you know shoe repair you become a national resource! Do you have skills that could help a man or woman earn a living for a family? Can you repair autos, bicycles, TVs or other appliances? Take along some how-to books.

Practical skills make great bridges to cross-cultural relationships. I taught women in Spain to bake cookies and cakes with measuring cups and spoons and they taught me to make Spanish entrees with a kitchen scale. Marisa was distressed when she splattered bleach on two new pairs of slacks—a big loss for this student. She was delighted when I salvaged one pair with a floral stencil and fabric paint and the other with embroidered braid. In fact, she liked the postoperative versions better than the originals! Carol, unable to practise engineering in her new host country, repaired the sewing machines of her Muslim neighbors and they taught her to sew their long, colorful gowns. Practical skills can help you make friends in another culture and earn the right to talk about the Lord.

Tentmakers should do what they can to gain practical skills and improve them. What about helping parents or friends with projects? Or working on your own car with guidance from a friend? Or taking a course on construction or auto mechanics?

10. Recreational skills.

Sports and hobbies are also valuable bridges! When June went to teach international business in China she took tennis balls and rackets, and her friends laughed. But the same Chinese people came to the courts at the same time every week just to play with her. She was able to give them the good news about Jesus Christ along with her friendship. Doug joined an amateur neighborhood soccer team in Saudi Arabia. The Kerrs have won 75 Japanese to the Lord, partly because Pam's needlepoint attracted Japanese women! All kinds of hobbies and arts and crafts are valuable.

Christian life and ministry

Tentmakers' jobs are a vital part of their ministry, but are only one component. Tentmakers must be spiritually prepared to live out the gospel and to share it with people.

1. Relationship with God

Everything flows from the quality of your relationship with God. "It is not so much great talent that God uses as great likeness to himself." (Robert M. McCheyne.) You must nurture your inner life. Weeds grow without effort—arriving via TV, advertising, books, cultural values and pressures and our own deceptive hearts. But it takes effort to cultivate desired character qualities. Work out the practical implications of passages like Rom. 12:1,2 so that you build a pattern of constantly being transformed by renewing your mind. Your relationship to God deepens as your concept of him is enlarged. You relate to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in their different roles, as you learn about them from Scripture. Your relationship deepens through prayer, and through joys and trials. God never promises freedom from pain in a fallen world, but peace in the midst of it as we trust him. Without problems, we would never know firsthand how loving and powerful God is.

Many of us have sought one great spiritual experience to forever lift us to a higher spiritual plane, but there is no such thing. Some of us had an unforgettable experience when we first learned about the Holy Spirit's role in our lives. Some speak of this as a baptism of the Spirit and others call it his infilling. Billy Graham says, "I don't care what you call it, but get it!" Then we need to keep on being filled.

Once or twice a year we should evaluate our spiritual life with a checklist (go through Ephesians), to confess our sins and renew our commitment. Or we may be led to renew our commitment in an especially moving church meeting. Or at Promise Keepers, etc.

One experience can be life-changing, but nothing can take the place of daily renewing our relationship with the Lord. Keep a daily quiet time, ideally in the morning, to talk to the Lord and listen to his word. At bedtime, think through your day, confess sin and prepare for next day. (See VIP's Quiet Time.) Because this is so vital, it is where Satan will attack over and over. Maintain the discipline of time alone with God when you feel dry and mechanical, just as you when you feel warm and prayerful. "If you draw near to God, he will draw near to you," whether you feel his presence or not. (James 4:610)

Daily devotional reading and prayer are foundational to Christian character and daily living. Nothing can make up for a regular discipline of time alone with God. Use meditation questions like IVP's Search the Scriptures or devotional books like Oswald Chamber's My Utmost for His Highest. Read slowly through Packer's Knowing God or John White's The Fight.

2. Relationship with family

The family is an ideal, although difficult laboratory for working out relational problems. We know each other too well and take undue advantage of each other's sense of obligation and love. Relationships between parents and children and between siblings often need improving.

If you are married, you will want to read Christian books about marriage and family, and maybe attend seminars. These are not just to save troubled marriages, but to enhance good ones. Also, don't be afraid to seek counsel from sharp, godly couples you respect on how to deepen your marriage and family. You will face great stress in a new culture. You will need all the advantage you can get in family life. As you learn, think how you could use the same materials to help couples in your target country. (And materials on parenting!) Set a pattern of working proactively on your family life.

3. Relationships with others

A regular devotional time will do much toward producing the fruit of the Spirit in our lives. It consists of love, which, like light, is broken down into its rainbow qualities: joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. (Gal. 5:22, 23, 1 Cor. 13) These are indispensable for our relationships with family members, Christian coworkers, other church members, and the nonbelievers we seek to win—in the home, neighborhood, campus and workplace.

One of the greatest needs of missionaries is coworkers. Yet one of the biggest problems for missionaries is their relationships with each other. All serve at considerable sacrifice, have strong goals and strong feelings about how to reach them. They may feel incompatible with coworkers assigned to them. Many work under cultural stress. Mainly, Satan tries to undermine the work by causing disunity.

Some mission agencies give potential candidates excellent help in relational skills in their orientation courses, assessing how they relate to others during the course. (Do you notice when someone at the table needs a refill of iced tea?) It would be great if this kind of training were a part of all Christian student leadership training camps and conferences!

Because we often deceive ourselves, it helps to do journaling. In a notebook record each day's happenings—good things, problems, failures, devotional thoughts, etc. Be ruthlessly honest. Then two prayer partners (of the same sex) share with each other weekly from their diaries. Ideally, they learn to trust each other enough to exchange diaries. Spouses should partner with each other and periodically with another couple.

When a larger fellowship is made up of such partnerships of two, the quality of the whole fellowship quickly deepens and their ministry is empowered.

Tentmakers must find or form a team for fellowship and accountability in their new country. Why not start now to develop this kind of honesty and openness with one other person? A good place to start is with a small group in your campus Christian fellowship.

If several of you hope to serve in the same country, form a team now and take the next steps together. Not all of Steve's team went to southeast Asia, but those who didn't became his best prayer supporters—the "sending" half of his team.

Team building is an essential skill for tentmakers. And the heart of teamship (being a team) is working together for common goals above personal ambition or pet ideas and opinions. It is crucial to begin building this skill before arriving overseas.

In addition to relationship and team building skills, tentmakers need conflict resolution skills. Because people are different, conflict is inevitable. Do you know how to defuse a tense situation to avoid conflict? Without resolution, conflict will undermine a team. How do you handle differences of opinion, of strategy, of doctrine, etc.? How do you handle putdowns, competition, dishonesty and even betrayal? When must you confront? When extend grace? When apologize? How can you work issues through?

4. Bible knowledge

The Bible is our sword! Christians who do not know the Bible are caught in the worst war in history with neither armor nor weapon! They cannot help themselves or others.

How can you gauge whether or not your Bible knowledge is adequate? It is not enough to know "Bible trivia," facts like—Samuel's mother was Hannah, Paul was shipwrecked on Malta. These facts show you have had a few years of Sunday school, but tell little of your Bible knowledge.

Here are a few of the questions I would ask on a test. Since the Bible is all one story, how would you summarize the whole story in a few sentences? Can you summarize the book of Nehemiah in a few sentences and tell how it fits into the whole story? How many other books of the Bible can you summarize and correlate in this way? God miraculously rescues disobedient Jonah from death and then uses him to bring wicked Nineveh to repentance. Why does the story end with successful Jonah pouting, and God chiding him? (Why was the story recorded—who was to benefit?) How was the plight of God's people similar in Exodus and Ezekiel? What similarities do you note between the early chapters of Genesis and last chapters of Revelation? What connection is there between Haggai and Zechariah? Where would you find stories about Caleb?

Do you know two or three O.T. prophecies about Jesus that were fulfilled in the N.T.? (There are at least 65!) How does each of the four Gospels present Jesus in a different role? Where do you find data about Jesus' birth? List the chapters of John's Gospel from 1 to 21, and after each write anything you remember from its content. Do you recall something from each? What two or three verses in the Bible could help someone receive Jesus Christ? What passages would comfort a bereaved person? Make a plan for regular, daily Bible study, and you will be surprised at how your Bible knowledge will grow!

5. Bible memorization

It is not enough for a soldier to know how to use his sword—he must have it with him! Satan makes surprise attacks. There may not be time to hunt up a Bible nor find an appropriate passage.

The only good way to have your sword always ready is to memorize significant passages. Then the Holy Spirit can help you recall them at crucial moments. But how can he retrieve from your mental computer storage what you have never stored there?

Bible memory also facilitates cross-cultural ministry. Knowing where the passages are in your English Bible helps you locate them in your foreign language Bible. They provide you with the right vocabulary for talking about spiritual matters. It is always hard to learn to pray in another language, but if you memorize a few key verses from the Psalms, you will have proper sentence frames into which to substitute current concerns.

The secret to enjoyable memorizing is regular review. Navigators have a great system designed to fit into our odd moments. It comes complete with verse cards in a little packet. See *Bible Memorization: Benefits and Methods*.

6. Inductive Bible study skills

Why inductive? If you examine Bible study methods you find they are all different ways to deal with data you have found in a text. But most Christians suffer from habit focus and see only the same surface truths they always see. So they find little new data, the studies are superficial and boring.

Only the inductive method helps you dig below the surface for the details to interpret and correlate. It is the only method guaranteed to help you see new things every time you return to a familiar passage. It helps you get at the meaning of difficult passages, because it is the only method that takes the literary character of the Bible seriously. God chose to give us his revelation in the form of literature, so we must approach it like any other ancient literature—like Greek tragedies. But it is more than literature, so we study with prayer, depending upon the Holy Spirit.

Most people jump immediately into the application of a passage, omitting two crucial steps. Inductive study consists of these steps: 1) Observation: What does the passage really say? You ask the content questions: Who are the main characters? What is the main action? When and where does it happen? How does it occur? Why does it occur? What are the consequences? Then you ask composition questions, looking for literary devices like: repetitions, comparisons, contrasts, figures of speech, quotes or allusions, unusual words, logic, proportion and others. 2) Interpretation: What did the passage mean to the writer and to the first readers? Why did the writer record this passage? Why did he place it in this context? What kind of literature is it? Then you use the text, immediate context, cross-references, dictionaries, Bible dictionaries, atlases, etc. for word meanings, cultural background, etc. Then correlate your findings. But do not consult commentaries until you have completed your own study. 3) Application: What does this passage mean for me today and how can I apply it to my situation? 4) Final form: How can I arrange the data to facilitate sharing it with others? You will probably turn the study into a Bible study guide.

Learn to make good questions to help people to see the implications of the details, and to arrive at right conclusions. Not easy! Or turn the material into an inductive sermon, a magazine article, a story, a letter, a poem or a song.

Inductive Bible study is essential for tentmakers. High school science teacher Mark, in Kenya, was asked to preach every third Sunday in a village church! In parts of China or a Muslim country, where there is no church, the best spiritual nourishment you will get may be what you dig out for yourself! It may also be the best nourishment your family, your team members and your local converts will get! When the Saudi Arabian government ordered the 300 Christian expats in Riyadh to cease worship meetings, they divided into little house fellowships. The leaders met every week to pray and to prepare the next week's sermon together. Who led these preparation sessions? An agricultural engineer! The house churches became more effective than before!

Your personal Bible study must be regular—either 20 to 30 minutes a day or a three hour period once a week. It is more valuable to spend a week studying one small passage, than to do larger portions superficially.

7. Leading Bible study discussion

Bible training should be provided during the student years in a variety of ways already suggested in this paper.

The group discussions should also be led inductively, whether evangelistic or for discipling and fellowship. Instead of giving a talk, ask questions to help participants discover quickly what it took you longer to dig out. There is joy in discovery! Participants remember longer what they find for themselves. It is an ideal method for working persons whose peers do not consider them religious authorities.

But ask questions that help people draw conclusions from the details—not questions that only test ability to read. Hundreds of study guides are available, but many have poor questions. Two series are consistently good—IVP and NBS (Neighborhood Bible Studies). Many of these guides are also available in foreign languages. Have you developed skill in firmly but flexibly leading Bible study discussions? Do you know how to adapt your leadership to a group made up entirely of nonbelievers? See helpful suggestions in Jim Nyquist's *Leading Bible Discussions*, IVP.

8. Investigative Bible studies

Investigative Bible studies are for nonbelievers. I have seen more people find the Lord in IBS's than any other way. But inviting a couple of nonbelievers to a regular Bible study doesn't make it evangelistic. A true IBS has a majority of nonbelievers, so they don't feel pressure from a Christian majority. You prepare an environment in which they feel comfortable. You lead a discussion of the passage with questions. They give answers from the text, not mere opinions. You use mainly Gospel narratives—the Bible's evangelistic literature. You help participants observe Jesus in action and interact with him vicariously through the characters in the stories. The seekers discover who he really is and commit themselves to him. I cannot imagine a fruitful tentmaking ministry without IBS's! Have you ever tried this? GO also provides training in IBS's. See *Investigative Bible Study Discussions*.

9. Christian doctrine

You will learn doctrine in your Bible study, but for the purpose of teaching and evangelism, you should also learn the main Christian doctrines as propositions with supporting passages. You may think you know them, but what would you include in a half-hour talk about God? Or justification by faith? Or the incarnation of Jesus? Or the meaning of his resurrection? Could you make it interesting and fresh? What passages would you use?

You can read books on doctrine, like Hammond's classic *In Understanding Be Men*. But try putting yourself through a workbook on doctrine, where you are given all the pertinent passages and you make your own doctrinal formulations. Gordon Lewis's *Decide for Yourself*, IVP, is very good. In Brazil I had each new IVCF-IFES student group make up its own doctrinal statement this way, and then study the wording of prepared statements of Christian organizations, to see what heresies they were guarding against.

10. Defending the faith

Wherever you go, your Christian beliefs will be challenged. How do you answer when someone says that there is no God? Or there are 33 million of them? That all religions are basically the same? That the Bible is not true? That there is no absolute truth? That the Koran supercedes the Bible? That Jesus was a great man but not God? That he never rose from the grave? That prayer is self-suggestion?

Do you need more preparation in apologetics? You may want to make your own little notebook or file box with hard questions you encounter, or fear, and file your best answers and verses. Then seek out and record better answers. I learned more this way than just reading a book. But why not do both? See *Evidences that Demand a Verdict* by Josh McDowell (Campus Crusade for Christ) and two books by the late Christian Islamicist and London Univ. professor, J. N. D. Anderson: *Christianity and Comparative Religions* and *The World Religions*. Study the passages and formulate your own answers, with Lewis's workbook, *Judge for Yourself*.

11. Evangelism—learn to fish

This is usually the tentmakers' most important ministry, because of the long hours they associate with outsiders. They spend most of their time on the frontlines—with non-believers, in spiritually hostile environments, under the pressure of non-Christian values, and dealing with the challenges of false religions. Most missionaries do much of their work in the churches, behind the lines.

Many Christians fail to evangelize because they believe it should be left to people with a special gift for it. It means they are on a fierce battlefield but do not know how to fight! In wartime, inaction is a kind of action—it is helping the other side! Jesus said that all who are not gathering new believers with him are actually scattering them (Mt. 12:30, 10:32, 33).

But most Christians avoid evangelism because they are uncomfortable invading the privacy of strangers and imposing on them unwelcome religious conversation. Most Christians who evangelize at all tend to hunt—press spiritual conversation on people. But hunting is too aggressive for the workplace or campus—it turns people off. It is too risky for hostile countries.

Both Peter and Paul describe evangelism as answering the questions of people who ask about God. They are seekers, who have been made hungry for God by observing Christians around them and listening to their occasional comments about God. (Col. 4:5,6, 1 Pet. 3:14,16.) What matters is the Christian's personal integrity, quality work, caring relationships and fitting words about God. You fish out the seekers and engage them in your friendship evangelism.

This always includes instructing the new believer, because the Great Commission tells us to make disciples, not mere converts. We do this by teaching them all that the Lord has taught us (Mt. 28:18,20), helping them reach spiritual maturity (Col. 1:28,29) and become useful members of a good church (Heb. 10:24, 25).

Why go overseas if you cannot evangelize at home? Yet evangelism is where most Christians feel the weakest. How often do you speak to people about the Lord? Have you ever helped someone receive Jesus Christ? It is not easy to find good training in evangelism, and especially, fishing evangelism. GO has a good paper to help you develop this skill.

You learn evangelism, like swimming, by doing it. A secular college or university campus is an ideal place to learn. Not only can you seek to win your own compatriots, but also international students. Campus fellowships also give some of the best training in Bible study and in Christian leadership. Would you know how to start a student group in a foreign city that does not have one? Christians can also do cross-cultural evangelism in their workplace and neighborhood. See Workplace Evangelism.

12. Church-planting and other ministries

Self-reproducing, indigenous churches are the ultimate goal of missions. But church planting is no great mystery! If there is none among the people where you work, let your IBS (evangelistic Bible study) grow into a DBS (discipleship Bible study)—then into a small house church! If two or three tentmakers join their DBS's, a small congregation can result! Or start a children's club, then invite parents and grandparents to come hear them sing and recite, and then add a weekly preaching service.

But what do you know about baptism? About serving communion? About church leadership? What are the essentials of a church? When does a group become a church? How do you start a culturally indigenous church? (George Patterson has written excellent material on this subject.)

It is ideal to gain experience before going overseas. Is there a new church project going on near you? Do your international friends need a church? Would your home church like to start one for an ethnic group in your community? Could you and friends start a children's Bible club in a needy neighborhood? Can you join a summer church planting team overseas?

One summer, several students and I helped a missionary couple in El Salvador start a church in a new part of the city where there was none. We canvassed the area, going door to door, discovering where people were spiritually. Many let us lead them in a 20minute Bible study. Several shared painful problems and wept as we offered counsel. Mainly, we invited them to an all day Saturday picnic in a nearby park and to the first Sunday service. We got that new church off to an excellent start!

Your home church is a great place to acquire other ministry skills. As with practical skills, some Christians take every opportunity to learn—to give a talk to the youth group, to help put on a skit, to teach a Sunday school class, to lead an evangelism project, etc. They may not know how to do it, but they seek orientation from people who know, so they learn. But other Christians are so cautious and afraid of failure that they turn down every opportunity unless they feel certain they can do it. Pride hinders learning.

What kinds of ministries do you think you could do in another country, in addition to evangelism and small group Bible study? Can you preach a sermon? Can you teach children? Are you good at drama? Do you sing? Play an instrument? Have you ever taught in a Vacation Bible School? Could you organize and run one? Does your church have a prison or hospital or social work program, where you could gain experience? Can you learn how to start a women's group abroad? Or a men's group? Can you learn something from Promise Keepers, Christian Businessmen, Full Gospel Businessmen or Gideons?

13. Spiritual warfare

In a war, not all soldiers need officer training, but all had better know how to fight! Unfortunately, some Christians risk the danger of "practising the presence of Satan." You can also blame everything on him and fail to take personal responsibility. Sin and temptation assault us also through the evil world system and our own sinful vulnerability.

Paul says to think about things that are true and lovely and pure and good (Phil. 4:8). James 4:7, 8 says to resist the devil and he has to flee from us! Draw near to God and he draws near to you. I never talk to the devil. I ask the Lord to oust him!

It has become popular to emphasize the more exotic aspects of spiritual warfare— identifying evil spirits and expelling demons. But basic spiritual warfare is not exotic. It is skillful use of the sword of God's Word, for self-defense, for destroying the arguments of the enemy, and persuading rebels to change sides. It is all we have already talked about. Paul urged Timothy to be a good soldier of Jesus Christ and to lay aside civilian pursuits until this war is over! (2 Tim. 2:17)

Paul insists that we put on the full armor of God. This suggests that maintaining these qualities is not automatic. He mentions the breastplate, shoes, helmet, shield, etc. (Eph. 6:10-17) When you remove the military metaphors, you have left: the assurance of salvation, faith in God's power and love, truth in our heart and speech, righteousness in our conduct, and readiness to give out the gospel—to answer questions. But we are not just to acknowledge these qualities, but to wear them! A Christian friend visualizes herself putting on her armor each morning as she dresses, reminding herself of what must characterize all her personal encounters that day. Verse 17 adds prayer—our personal hotline to Headquarters!

But the same passage says we should not be ignorant of the devil or his tactics. We should know all that the Bible says about him and learn from others how he attacks. The gospel curbs the devil's ability to deceive the nations, so if you go to a country where God's Word is hardly known, you may encounter more overt demonic activity. That is true also wherever voodoo and other forms of demonism are practised, like Haiti, Brazil, Africa. Learn to distinguish ordinary physical or mental illness from that caused by demon activity. Learn the signs of demon possession and how to deal with it. But never attempt this alone—always have another Christian with you!

A few Christians make direct attacks on the enemy their main ministry. God has greatly used Neuza Itioka in Brazil to lead the defeat of satanic forces in the voodoo culture in Brazil. But this should not be the main focus of most believers. Instead, focus on the enemy's victims, rescuing them, occupying territory and building Christ's church!

Tentmakers need understanding and experience in spiritual warfare. How can you learn more and build it into your life?

14. Missions training

How much do you know about the following? 1) The biblical basis of missions. What does the O.T. tell us about missions? The N.T.? Why should anyone take the gospel to another culture? 2) The history of missions. How did the church begin and how did it spread for 2000 years, and how has it spread during the last 200 years? 3) The geography of missions. Where in this world is the church strong and where is it weak or nonexistent? How fast is it growing? (Patrick Johnstone's Operation World helps you to pray around the world about one and a half times a year!) 4) Trends, issues and strategies in missions. What past mistakes should you avoid? What current ideas should you try? 5) Cross-cultural living and witness. What do you know about culture shock and culture fatigue and how to deal with them? About learning a foreign culture and language?

An excellent way to acquire this knowledge is through a Perspectives missions training course. These are now given in over 100 U.S. locations and are usually scheduled one evening a week for students and working people. Or you can take it as a summer course. A second best—do it by correspondence. A last resort—study the textbook on your own.

It is also good to become familiar with your own denominational mission agency and a few nondenominational ones. See Marc's Missions Handbook in a church library.

This thick directory allows you to choose agencies according to their countries or the services they perform. For example, you can find the ones that work in Togo or Ireland or Nepal, and those that hire pilots or gym teachers or graphic artists or radio engineers. You can also find the same information on about 200 agencies in the Urbana exhibitors guide. Write for their publications. Correspond with a few individual missionaries.

You should also get firsthand experience in another culture, if possible. Mission agencies have several hundred summer service programs, where you work along with missionaries. The programs vary greatly in quality, from mere building construction, to evangelism and church planting. An excellent one is LAM's Spearhead in Mexico and Central America—a summer program and a one-year program. You can also learn from missionaries as you do tentmaking—earning modestly through vacation jobs abroad, or doing the study abroad and paid internships already mentioned above.

All this may seem a little daunting, but the pieces overlap, and some of it can be acquired informally. Most important, winning this war deserves our greatest effort and preparation! But we must now consider formal training. How much is needed and where should you go?

Where to prepare

Because you need both academic and Christian ministry training, most Christian leaders would tell you without hesitation to attend a Christian college or university. But the answer is not that simple. It may or may not be the best place for you.

What are some pros and cons of getting your academic and spiritual preparation in Christian educational institutions? What are the pros and cons of getting both in a secular college or university? Lastly, what about combining the two?

1. Christian institutions

Academic preparation. A big advantage in a Christian college is hearing classroom lectures on science and philosophy, etc., from a Christian point of view. You also have access to a wide variety of Bible, theology and missions courses. You may be able to study under highly qualified, highly committed faculty. But sometimes academic or spiritual excellence have to be sacrificed to budgetary considerations. Sometimes the secular views being contested are not accurately presented and the "Christian" answers are inadequate. Many of the "answers" I was taught in my Bible courses did not hold up in college because the professor had never properly understood what non-believers were saying.

Only certain majors are offered in Christian colleges. Most do not teach agriculture or aviation, for example. Though LeTourneau University does.

Spiritual preparation. Another advantage is that you can take courses in Bible at the same time that you pursue your vocational studies. A Christian campus might seem an ideal place for spiritual growth. Unfortunately, that is not totally true. Some students attend because of a deep desire to serve the Lord. But many have little spiritual interest. They attend: 1) Because of pressure from parents who hope the school can straighten them out spiritually. 2) Because they want a clean, safe campus rather than a dangerous, secular one. 3) Because they want to find a Christian spouse.

Two other factors complicate matters. 1) Because so many students have no strong Christian commitment, administrators make many rules. The bad conduct of weak students must not be allowed to mar the institution's public reputation. The bulk of the students then resist the rules and seek ways to break them. 2) Chapels and certain other activities are made compulsory, which is usually counterproductive and increases the rebellious spirit.

A student who had won friends to the Lord in high school said about her Christian college, "If you want to be popular here, you have to bend over backwards not to associate with the squares who go to prayer meetings." I lower my expectations when I go to speak on missions, knowing that my listeners are probably attending a compulsory activity. This atmosphere is not ideal for spiritual growth, though some years revival improves a campus for awhile.

I am referring only to genuinely evangelical institutions. The situation can be worse in denominational colleges. My friend, a new believer, had her spiritual expectations crushed on her Christian campus by the immorality between students and faculty.

But even where the teaching and the atmosphere are excellent, students are isolated from secular society and disengaged from non-Christians. This undermines the value of the training. Consider Christian colleges as a good option, but have realistic expectations.

2. Secular universities/colleges

Of course, secular campuses are far worse! You will find blatant immorality, cheating, drugs, etc. But these do not take you by surprise. If God leads you to do your academic preparation there, it need not be damaging, because you know you are going into a mission field. You join forces with the other spiritual warriors on this battlefield, to help each other, and you watch God use you over and over for his glory.

Academic preparation. It can be advantageous to do your vocational studies in a secular school, because it is likely to have better name recognition overseas—even state colleges. A state college will be recognized as part of a well-known system. You can choose from the whole range of careers.

But don't let yourself be cheated. A newspaper article on the current dumbing down of U.S. higher education, says many institutions no longer recognize degrees from the New York State University system because it has capitulated to today's politically correct philosophy, which is really a kind of atheistic neofascism. They have abandoned most of the objective core content traditionally considered higher education. Some reject Western civilization and substitute racially-based mythology. That kind of degree will prove useless in other countries.

U.S. News and World Report does periodic evaluations of which universities are best for which vocations. They may give you access to better research possibilities and to overseas internships. Most secular institutions have a certain percentage of Christian faculty. But most of your courses will be presented from a secular and even an anti-Christian view. However, Christian students do not usually lose their faith on campus; they lose their parents' faith which they had adopted without thinking. As they find answers to the hostile attacks, they develop a strong personal faith in God and in all facets of his absolute truth.

Some Christian students do poorly because they feel that secular study is unspiritual. Not so. Paul says that doing our secular work well is an essential to our Christian witness on the job.

The young hostage, Daniel, began as a study abroad tentmaker, in the the liberal arts college of the University of Babylonia. Imagine having to do daily studies in the literature and philosophy and astrology of this demonic, pagan, immoral, idolatrous land! But Daniel and his friends graduated summa cum laude! They knew that to do the studies well did not mean they approved of them. But it helped them understand this wicked culture and gave credibility to their witness.

Furthermore, all truth is God's truth. He is in the truth business and the creation mandate gives us the task of pursuing truth about his creation. The university's mission is inherently legitimate—just distorted. This simply means we have to work harder to think critically and develop a Christian view of basic intellectual issues and of our field in particular.

How can you keep this daily bombardment from undermining your faith? How can you grow and even thrive on a secular campus?

Spiritual preparation. Ideally, you join a campus Christian fellowship and make full use of its training. Your life depends on them! This in-service training is not just for the future, but for now. You are already on your first mission field! It is as important as any other you will ever have. A secular university is a microcosm of our multicultural, spiritually hostile world. It is hard to imagine a more ideal place for missions service and tentmaker training.

It is a tough place to live a genuinely Christian life, and you survive only by constant personal and group Bible study, personal and group prayer and fellowship with like-minded believers.

This is why a campus Christian fellowship usually consists of committed, growing Christians, all of whom attend only because they really want to. There is no parental pressure. In fact, their participation in the Christian group can be costly and subject them to ridicule from students and faculty. It costs to let others know you are a convinced Christian.

These Christians value Bible study and evangelism training. They learn small group and large group leadership. Camps and conferences provide excellent training. Often there is a steady stream of conversions, so there are always new members to disciple and train. These can be exciting groups!

But all campus fellowships are not the same. 1) Some are not much more than extensions of a local church, led by a youth minister, with the same monastic mentality. If they do any evangelism it consists of an occasional hit-and-run raid, with little positive effect. 2) Other campus groups are missions to students. Staff workers are assigned to do campus evangelism and put on activities for students. This may draw students for awhile, but when the staff workers leave the groups usually collapse. 3) The best kind is a student movement, with emphasis on student initiative. Staff workers may be able to do the ministry better, but instead they train students to do it. Instead of putting on evangelistic blitzes, they train students to win and disciple their friends, to nurture each other, to plan and carry out small and large group activities. Students are allowed to learn from their mistakes. They learn to trust God, not the staff person. Campus fellowships of several hundred are often divided into two or four subgroups, to give more students leadership experience.

Many years of campus ministry have biased me thoroughly in favor of the student movement. The best example is IVCF and its sister movements in the IFES family worldwide. In the long run, it is far more effective in producing Christian leaders for national churches and international ministries.

A secular campus gives ample opportunity to learn to relate to non-believers in an uncompromising, but attractive, nonjudgmental way. For instance, what do you do when your roommate brings in a friend of the opposite sex to spend the night? Many Christians win their roommates to the Lord. Often two Christians share a dorm room or several share an apartment. But there is always ample opportunity for living out the gospel and speaking about Jesus Christ in a tactful, nonjudgmental way. You do friendship evangelism with the seekers you have fished out.

Since both Christian and secular schools have pros and cons, why not get the best of both worlds?

3. Why not combine schools?

The best academic and spiritual training for many students will occur on a secular campus, but supplemented with Christian training courses. Then you get the benefit of Bible, theology and missions training while serving on the front lines. You get both kinds of training and the Christian courses are much more meaningful.

The Christian college is an American phenomenon, existing primarily in our country and where our missionaries have started them overseas. In Europe and elsewhere there are a few Christian schools for theological studies, but not for academic study.

There is another problem with Christians attending Christian schools. so Most secular institutions have so few Christians that it seems sad to withdraw them into another Christian ghetto! It leaves no one to represent God on secular campuses! This cannot be God's will. It is the same monastic principle which plagues the church, and is utterly unbiblical.

1) It short-circuits what God wants to do in the university. (I have been saddened to see this happen in several unevangelized countries.)

2) It also short-circuits what God wants to do in the Christian students. If their job is to count for Jesus Christ in the university, then that is where they will grow best—as they are obedient to their calling. People who have attended a Christian elementary and high school, a Christian college and then maybe a seminary., are poorly equipped for missions. Pius Wakatama, a Christian professor in Zimbabwe who studied in the U.S., writes that many American missionaries adjust poorly to a new culture because they never adjusted to the culture of their home country. Instead, they lived isolated lives in semi-monastic communities.

A separate Christian school education can also cause problems getting into a country. Foreign employers know Purdue and Ohio State, but might balk at hiring someone from Messiah Bible University. Most Christian schools have more religiously neutral names. But your transcript can cause additional problems.

1) An American employer may reject your application outright, or he may hire you in the hope that you will be conscientious and will fit better into a Muslim culture than others who chafe under Muslim no alcohol laws.

2) A potential Muslim employer in Saudi Arabia may take one look and reject you, or he may think all westerners are Christians anyway (as all Saudis must be Muslims), and not be surprised at your Christian alma mater. But he will be put off by a transcript showing evangelism and missions courses.

A chronological resume must show where you worked or studied each year. A functional resume need mention only what is pertinent to the job requested. This can play down Christian courses, but sooner or later a full curricula vitae will be requested. It is bad if a discrepancy between them makes it appear that you lied. But if you study in a secular institution and supplement with courses from a Christian college, that data need not appear, because it is taken concurrently with your secular studies. You could also do graduate studies in a Christian institution, concurrently with a secular job. So it can be advantageous to combine both secular and Christian institutions.

Possible combinations. 1) You may live where you can take classes at a secular institution and a Christian one at the same time. Does a Bible school or Christian college near you offer night classes? 2) You might meet your two years of lower division classes in a Christian college, including as much Bible as possible, and then transfer to a secular university. 3) You might do four years on a secular campus, taking advantage of all the training of a campus fellowship, and then do a year of intensive Christian studies.

Applicants often ask if they should go to a theological seminary? It depends on their immediate and long-range goals. Usually, they want help with Bible study and evangelism and are disappointed to find the studies too academic and impractical for their needs. There are four kinds of Christian study programs for college graduates.

1) Theological seminaries.

They provide training for prospective pastors, and include courses like exegesis, hermeneutics, homiletics, church history, Hebrew and Greek, pastoral theology, etc., resulting in a Master of Divinity, or with further study, a Master of Theology, a Doctor of theology or a Doctor of Ministries. Seminaries have been academic and content-centered, but are slowly becoming more ministry and people-centered.

2) Graduate schools of theology.

They provide academic study in Old and New Testaments and a wide range of theological subjects for Christians who are called into education, law, the arts, sciences, industry, government, teaching, etc. and who wish to integrate their faith and their academic disciplines. This usually results in an MA in Religion. Regent College in Vancouver is an excellent example. They deal with secular ideas in the light of our Christian world view.

3) Bible college

Intensive one-year study programs for graduates may lead to an MA in Religion. Colleges like Multnomah in Oregon and Columbia Bible College in South Carolina have great, intensive programs.

4) Graduate schools of missions.

You study subjects like the biblical basis for missions, church history, methods, issues, trends, problems, and may have a strong emphasis on anthropology and linguistics—resulting in an M A in Missions. Further study leads to a Doctorate in Missiology. These courses are found in Christian colleges or in seminaries.

But many schools acquired their names years ago—so names do not indicate the courses offered. The Seminary and Graduate School Handbook, an annual magazine of Berry Publications, provides information on scores of Christian educational institutions. You can write the schools for more information.

Tentmakers need excellent academic training and excellent spiritual ministry training. They have a dual vocation. A mission agency's minimum requirement is usually a year or two of Bible in a Bible school or college. Tentmakers should have the equivalent whether acquired formally or informally. Some may have received good training in their churches or in a campus fellowship.

4. Financing your education.

Mission leader Ralph Winters says the biggest problem in recruiting new missionaries is "college students who are too burdened with debts to allow them to go into missions." Most give up the idea entirely. College costs have gone up by three or four times in the last few years. They feel justified in raising prices because loans are available to almost everyone. A couple may have \$30,000 to \$40,000 in joint loans to repay (the average is \$11,000 per person), and an additional amount in credit card debts! They find themselves in this hole just a time when they are eager to go abroad, or to establish a home or start a family. But they have mortgaged their future, and are not free to go where the Lord calls. There are ways to avert or diminish this problem. See our GO Paper, Students and Graduates: Financing an Education.

5. How long will it take?

Several mission leaders have written that it takes 12 years after high school to be ready to serve as missionaries! I am thankful for well-prepared missiologists. But, not every soldier needs officer training! But all must have spiritual maturity, cultural adaptability, and skills in evangelism and Bible study.

Ralph Winter considers the long years of academic preparation the second biggest problem in getting people overseas. During the years of study, students lose their missionary vision.

We believe that all of the pieces mentioned above can be fit into four or five years, if the student takes advantage of all the learning opportunities available. God sends no finished products overseas, because he has none! When I see individuals add course after course to their doctorates, I wonder if they will ever go abroad. If they do, will they feel any need of the Lord?

Also, God does not give us preparation and then send us out to see what we can do with it. Rather, he takes us by the hand and leads us out, step by step, and teaches us as we go. We have suggested a reasonable amount of preparation to get off to a good start. But you will constantly supplement your learning, and will have opportunities for further formal training, too. This later training is often more motivated and effective. Some decide after a couple of years abroad that they do need a doctorate in a secular or a ministry field. Usually, there is a way to do this.

The mission leaders who said it would take 12 years to be ready have it all wrong. It seems too long. But in another sense, 12 years is not nearly long enough! It takes a lifetime! God will constantly give you new assignments, greater challenges, and you will have to keep learning! This is one of the exciting aspects of our Christian life!

Resolve in your heart never to stop learning. Make plans for your self-education. Learn to love books. Skim some quickly, picking out their main ideas. Read others slowly, devotionally, to savor every page. Study others. As I read through certain key books, I memorize the outline and make up test questions for myself. I have asked my students to memorize the outline of Stott's Basic Christianity and know the passages in each, because I consider it that valuable for evangelism. I read secular and Christian magazines. But I can rarely take the time to look up articles in old issues. So I always read with a pen and an exacto knife in my hands, to mark up and cut out articles I wish to keep in my subject files.

In conclusion, remember that the war is not just out there somewhere, but is global. You do not have the luxury of peaceful preparation before you go into battle. You are in the war now. Your Jerusalem (Acts 1:8) is where you live, work and study now. It may not be where God wants you six months from now. Ask him to guide you according to his will. Your next assignment will almost certainly depend on how faithfully you did your present one. God does not require success, but he does ask faithfulness. (Mt. 25:21-23)

God has also designated your team members—those Christians around you, whether you feel compatible or not. Pray together and help each other to stand firm in the faith, and to fight this spiritual battle, lovingly rescuing the rebels from the enemy's hand.

At the same time, because you love God, you must care how the war is going on other more distant fronts. Keep the communication lines open—read reports, write to missionaries and tentmakers and pray for them. Keep the supply lines open, sending money where it is needed. And be prepared to be sent out yourself to where the battle is fierce.

Jesus has already won the decisive battle! We are making great progress in occupying the countries of his world, and persuading rebels. In Latin America the church is growing three times as fast as the population, and in parts of Africa five

times as fast! In Buddhist South Korea, two in five are evangelicals! The momentum matters. As we near the end of this century and this millenium, we can see the finish line! This is not the time to hold back, but the time to press ahead with all our might! Prepare first, while you hold down the fort here, and be ready to go where God calls!

–Ruth E. Siemens



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