

On **mission**

ROAD TO GOING GLOBAL



PRIMER

Ronald Brown & Rebecca Brown

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Authors

Rebecca Brown was born in Canada and raised in Africa by missionary parents, attending international schools in Brazzaville, Congo, and Bouake, Côte d'Ivoire. Her BA in Behavioral Sciences is from Ambrose University in Calgary, and her MA in International Community Development is from Eastern University in Philadelphia.

Rebecca did a two-year apprenticeship in Niger after university. She currently works with a global development agency and lives with her husband and two children in North Africa.

Ronald Brown was born and raised in Central Africa by missionary parents. He then lived in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Republic of Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, and Senegal for a total of 26 years while engaged in international work with The Alliance Canada.

His education degree is from the University of Calgary, and his missiology degrees are from the Canadian Theological Seminary (Ambrose Seminary) and Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (DMin) near Chicago. He lives with his wife, Myra, in Calgary, Alberta, Canada. Their two daughters were raised as third-culture kids in Africa.

He adds, "As authors, our stories and experiences come from years of international living. We have spent 58 combined years living outside of Canada in seven countries. We have individually travelled and visited 51 countries on six continents, seeing the cultures of the world. We have each struggled to learn three languages."

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Introduction

by Ronald Brown

Going global isn't as easy as moving from one province to another. There are some things along the way that have to be understood and learned. Our effort in this missions primer is to introduce those things and prepare the road ahead for you.

I recently listened to [podcast \(GMP197\)](#) where Dick Brogden said that 80 percent of global workers leave for two reasons; 40 percent because of conflict with team members or locals; 40 percent due to not mastering language and culture over time.

This book is intended to help newcomers to a global assignment better engage with the changes coming at them for daily living and their new workplace. It takes ongoing perseverance over time to get to where we can work and communicate the good news of Jesus with local people. The short tips are intended to help you facilitate good transitions toward longevity and to decrease premature departures from global assignments.



Part A: Before You Go

Tip 1

Know Which Worldview You're Going Into

by Ronald Brown

You know there are three, don't you?



Honour and shame cultures are generally in Asian and Middle Eastern countries; **power and fear** cultures are predominant in African countries, and North America is very much about **guilt and innocence**. However, in this global village in which we live, it is understood these cultures and worldviews are blended, but there will be a primary worldview where you are moving to work.

What difference does it make? Well, as a visitor working, let's say in a shame and honour worldview group of people, it would certainly not be fitting for you to speak to a colleague, especially in public, in a way that would disgrace them and consequently their family. It would be best to consider bringing honour to a person or family instead. Dealing with a difficult subject matter needs to be done in private, where no shame is incurred, and never in public. In a classroom, a teacher would not shame a student in front of the other students. Instead, a teacher would seek to bring honour to a student in front of others, especially before their parents.

What good news would you preach in each worldview? In North America, gospel messages are about **Jesus coming to take away our guilt**. Good News in Africa is of how **Jesus has come to give us power, through the Holy Spirit, over the fear of evil spirits** and curses. In Asia, the good news is that **Jesus came to take away my shame and give me a place of honour**. All those scripture verses are in the Bible; you just need to find what applies in your setting. In today's global village, an aware pastor preaching the gospel would cover all three points if he saw people from these three worldviews in his congregation.

Resources

Books



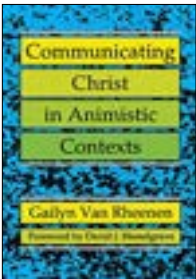
The 3D Gospel: Ministry in Guilt, Shame, and Fear Cultures by Jayson Georges, published by Tim & 275; Press, 2014

Western theology emphasizes forgiveness of sins, but people in the Majority World covet honour or spiritual power. The 3D Gospel is a concise, practical book explaining the world's three primary culture types and how the gospel addresses guilt, shame, and fear. In today's globalized world, Christians need a three-dimensional gospel for all cultures.



Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures by Jayson Georges and Mark D. Baker, published by IVP ACADEMIC; 1st edition, 2016

Anyone who would like to interact positively with people from an honour-shame culture should implement many of the suggestions from the book.



Communicating Christ in Animistic Contexts by Gailyn Van Rhee, published by William Carey, 1991

Whether in New Age mysticism, occultism, Haitian voodooism, Chinese ancestor veneration, or Japanese Shintoism, animistic beliefs are widespread, even today. Gailyn Van Rhee presents a rigorous, biblical, theological, and anthropological foundation for ministering in animistic contexts.

Video

- [90-minute video](#) - Ruth-Anne Gilbertson presents Lesson 10 of the Perspectives course at Ambrose University.

Website

- [GVAcademy | learnings in missiology \(wordpress.com\)](#)

Tip 2

Nine Character Traits to Grow Into

by Ronald Brown

1. Humility and Teachability

Jesus taught that Christians should deny themselves. His intention was not for them to demean themselves or engage in self-destructive thinking and mistake it for humility. Rather, it refers to a Christian having the attitude that other people really are important (Philippians 2:1-4) and accurately understanding how small he or she is in the totality of God's scheme.

Included with this spiritual quality is the teachability of the person. A teachable person recognizes the inherent worth and wisdom of others. Conversely, a person who is not teachable and comes across as one who only can give and never receive from others, including locals, will find it challenging to work in partnership alongside others.

2. Dependence on God

This means having a genuine submission to God's sovereignty in all parts of your life—a willingness to obey as He leads. This includes a growing life of prayer, daily time spent with Him, and a life that experiences His working out daily details in your life. The fruit of the Spirit is displayed in such a life: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5: 22-23). This fruit now becomes visible inside another culture. Christian leaders now working in another country should also demonstrate additional characteristics as found in these verses: 1 Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1:6-9.

3. More Emphasis on People than Task

This trait allows a global worker to be more approachable and to establish relationships more easily. Even introverts can be comfortable meeting and engaging with people in new settings. It is an ability to let go of a task when a relationship is at stake. Can you do that easily?

4. Ability to Withhold Unproductive Criticism

This is an ability to avoid judging everything and giving unproductive criticism of local customs, beliefs, and new ideas. Instead, the global worker shows respect by treating others in ways that make them seem valued.

5. Tolerance of Ambiguity and Flexibility

This is a difficult trait for those who love predictability for their security. Some cultures love ambiguity as it keeps options open, and life is then flexible. One must learn to read the culture. Tolerating ambiguity can be developed through growing trust in God coupled with a willingness to let go of control.

6. High Cognitive Complexity

This character trait is about avoiding quick black-and-white judgements and rejecting simplistic stereotypes. This is key in cross-cultural settings where quick evaluations by people who do not know the culture well are likely to be wrong. A person who consistently comes to snap judgements is not likely to see the nuances of culture and will develop a reputation of being insensitive or even hypocritical.

7. Perseverance

Perseverance is a capacity to remain in a difficult situation over time, not in a stubborn way, but until God says move.

8. Partnership Mentality

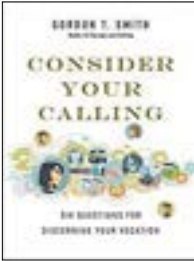
This is understanding our role as co-labourers with God, we intentionally seek to partner with others to promote the work of transformation around the world. We commit to working together as a family of faith in unity and community. With whom are you engaged outside of your agency?

9. Disciple-Making Mindset

This is a trait of seeing all relationships as part of a process of drawing people closer to walking with God. Prioritize prayer and engaging conversations with locals, who are not projects or targets, but are fellow humans on a journey towards a fuller life in Jesus. How many such relationships do you have now?

Resources

Books



Consider Your Calling: Six Questions for Discerning Your Vocation

by Gordon T. Smith, published by IVP Books, 2015

What on earth is God doing?

Who are you?

What is your stage of life?

What are your life circumstances?

What is the cross you will have to bear?

What are you afraid of?

We ask these six critical questions at points of transition in our lives. They all lead us to the one core question: What is the good work I am called to?

Smith acknowledges that this is a complex question to answer in the midst of our very complicated lives. That's why he has written this brief and accessible book—to offer the support and insight we need as we ponder these six core questions in community with God and others.



Courage & Calling: Embracing Your God-Given Potential

by Gordon T. Smith, IntersVarsity Press, 2011

God calls us first to Himself, to know and follow Him, and also to a specific life purpose, a particular reason for being. This second call or “vocation” has implications not only for our work or occupation but also includes our giftedness, our weaknesses, our life in community and what we do daily. Smith invites us to discover our vocation by listening to God and becoming coworkers with Him.

Videos

- Ruth-Anne Gilbertson on [essential qualities for international workers](#)
- Gordon Smith on [developing thoughts of discernment](#)

Tip 3

Know How to Dress

by Ronald Brown

While each region of the world is different, my sense is that you can quickly and easily spot two categories of foreigners in a country – the tourists and those that live there. The tourists put no thought into how they dress and look like they are from somewhere else – like they don't belong. The foreigners who are business people, embassy people, or charity workers look more like they fit in as they dress in a similar fashion and taste to locals. They appear to be at home and are likely treated with more respect than tourists.

So how can you as a daughter or son of the King of kings dress in order to fit in more quickly to your new home? Remember you are coming in your professional platform in order to “bless the nations,” so what kind of dress can help you fulfill that goal? Might it help if you bought it locally? Could you ask a local friend, maybe your language helper can say what someone like you should and should not wear? For sure check with other savvy ex-pats around you.

What head coverings are expected and when? In Muslim countries, you will observe one thing for women. In some of the Christian African countries where I've lived, married women would have head coverings and young unmarried girls not covered. Men out of respect always take their hats off when entering the church. As a newcomer, check with others what is the right thing to do and what is the meaning of the head covered and uncovered for someone of your age, status, and profession.

To show or not to show legs? For men, short pants are usually worn at home. From my African years, men when out of the home are always in long pants – they do not show their legs. Women – read the room – see what locals are doing. Check with your team leader.

One ministry in Thailand advises, “When you're out in Phuket consider the following: you are representing FFI, therefore you want to dress in a way that represents us well! In Thailand, the local people dress quite modestly. We don't expect you to dress exactly like the locals do, but out of respect, we hope that you might consider them and the importance of modesty in Thai culture.

“At the Beach: Two pieces are fine for girls. That being said, we would appreciate the avoidance of string bikinis, strapless bathing suits, and thong bathing suits when at the beach. Board shorts are best for boys, no tiny speedos please! Phuket is very laid back and touristy; so, shorts, flip flops, t-shirts, are great for everyday wear.

“However, Thai culture is formal. So, avoid being sloppy or immodest in dress. For Thai church clothes, please bring a nice shirt (golf or short sleeve casual button up shirt) and pants, with closed shoes (ladies - a long dress or skirt) in case you visit a traditional church.” (*Thailand - Justice Semester - 2023*).

The apostle Paul has good counsel for us here, “We put no stumbling block in anyone’s path, so that our ministry will not be discredited” (2 Corinthians 6:3).

Resources

Websites

- Google dress codes for the country where you will be serving. For example,
 - worldatlas.com:
 - Maldives - “The 100% Muslim country features a strict dress code focused on modesty, per Islamic law. There are designated bikini beaches for bathing suits and other “revealing” clothes that don’t belong in public places in this country. The dress code is particularly strict regarding women, both locals and tourists.
“The government and male population believe that women should stay reserved in public or face unwanted attention and even harassment. By western standards, shorts and tanks are a norm in resort towns but would be regarded as skimpy in the Maldives. One should even wear a wrap dress over a swimsuit to the beach or check in advance if the particular spot allows swim-wear. A breezy long dress would be safe and cool for women’s warm-weather attire.”
 - Uganda - “Uganda is a socially conservative country with new legislation that bans “indecent dressing.” Wearing anything that reveals above the knees in public is considered grounds for arrest. The female population must dress every day as if going to a temple, in long skirts, pants, or a dress.”

Tip 4

Invest in the State of Your Heart and Soul

by Rebecca Brown

“When you are on the launch pad, you must have your life in order. You need to be at peace with your life. You want to be sure that the people you love know that you love them, and if you have any conflicts, you want to resolve them before you go.” These were the wise words of an astronaut as I remember them from a documentary I recently watched with my kids about the International Space Station. These words also apply to international worker life when preparing to launch into overseas ministry.

Healing and deliverance are topics that are not always discussed as frequently or as openly as perhaps they should be. In the last year, I had the privilege of taking the Soul Care course, and with hindsight being twenty-twenty, this is something I wish I had done before setting out on my first term overseas. Whether participating in a course focused on healing and deliverance or finding a spiritual director to work with you one-on-one prior to going, this is a practical prerequisite for overseas ministry.

First, when learning about transition, one of the acronyms you will likely learn is that of a RAFT. When you leave one place and go to the next, member care gurus will encourage you to **build a ‘RAFT’ – Reconciliation, Affirmation, Farewell and Think Destination.**

That first step – reconciliation is important as you prepare to leave your family and friends behind. Much like the words of the astronaut preparing to leave earth, you will want to make sure those you love know how much you love them, but you also want to resolve any conflicts, in as much as it is up to you, before leaving. A deep dive into your soul will reveal more than surface conflicts; it will help you better understand the root issues potentially lying dormant or actively rearing their ugly heads. Addressing these will help you to leave these relationships in a much healthier place.

Secondly, you are headed to the frontlines of battle in the spiritual realms. You might feel so out of your element when you first land. Any **insecurities** about who you are **can be footholds for the devil** to whisper lies about your value,

identity, and capabilities. Delving into matters of the soul will help you identify and remove these footholds. “Life in a fallen world is fraught with opportunities for conflict” (Reimer, 2016). Conflict is often a reason cited for the why behind attrition in international workers. Do what you can to pre-emptively reduce the opportunities for conflict by dealing with your own baggage and increasing your self-awareness. Do what you can to bring healing to your soul, so you can minister from a place of wholeness rather than brokenness.

You’ll also find yourself placed on top of a pedestal as someone willing to give up their comfortable life and move overseas for the sake of the gospel. As you feel the spotlight landing on you, there is **a temptation to feel like you must maintain a perfect façade**. “You won’t get well until you are more concerned with being good than you are with looking good” (Reimer, 2016). Before you find yourself on the pedestal, normalize being a fallen human still working out their salvation; you need healing and deliverance just as much as those you will someday minister to.

Lastly, **you will be ministering to humans who desperately need a Saviour, but they also need healing, deliverance, maybe even basic necessities, or other social supports**. They are multidimensional human beings with complex needs. Experiencing the tangible works of Christ in their lives can be a powerful turning point in their understanding of their need for Jesus. I know about deliverance as a believer, but I had never seen or experienced deliverance ministry. In fact, I was intimidated by it. It felt like I was missing a key tool in my toolbox. What would I have done if I found myself face-to-face with the need for it? While I trust the Spirit would have guided me, a proactive approach to learning about it and watching it being done gives me a sense of capability and reduces the intimidation factor.

In addition, ministry is messy. The North American Church likes to put things in boxes; overseas, we experience many things outside these boxes. How do we handle them? “Too often in the church, we are focused on behaviour management or sin management” (Reimer, 2016). Perhaps this is one of the most significant criticisms of previous generations of workers – **imposing our behavioural management on other cultures** – rather than relying on the transformation of the Spirit brought by the good news of Jesus Christ.

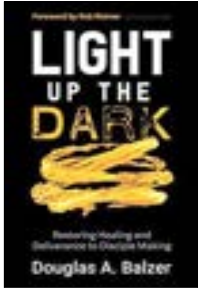
When we have no answers in the messy middle of a life turning to Christ and being sanctified, we will need to rely heavily on the input of the Holy Spirit and expect this divine intervention. He is concerned with our hearts, while we so often get sidetracked by behaviour instead of remembering our behaviours flow out from our hearts.

Investing in the state of our hearts and souls is worthwhile so our behaviour will better reflect the One we represent. Moreover, reminding ourselves, **as others’**

hearts are being transformed, so will their behaviour. So rather than imposing a list of 'shoulds,' or rules, let's take a backseat, let the Spirit work, and we can be a part of the cheering team, encouraging them in their new life.

Resources

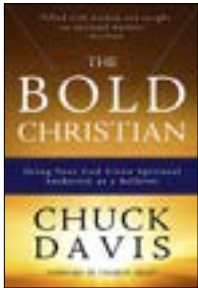
Books



Light Up the Dark: Restoring Healing and Deliverance to Disciple Making by Douglas A. Balzer, published by Word Alive Press, 2011.

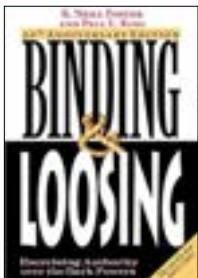
The power of darkness remains notably present in our world. Healing and deliverance ministries have always been intended to function as primary signs of Christ's advancing Kingdom of Light. Yet why were they so prolific during the time of Christ and the Early Church but distant today? How might we reclaim these while avoiding the ditches that harmed the church in the past?

How might we re-establish healing and deliverance as critical facets of disciple-making? Balzer leads you on this exploratory journey considering the foundation of scripture, history, and evidence-based research. Numerous recommendations are given to forming these expressions in a healthy, balanced, and reproducible manner. Jesus desires to light up the dark!



The Bold Christian: Using Your God Given Spiritual Authority as a Believer by Chuck Davis, published by Beaufort Books, 2016

Davis believes that while followers receive empowerment from the Holy Spirit, this power is only fully operational as they function out of their God-given authority. As believers, everything they need is at their disposal. However, they must actively appropriate their authority in attitude and action. Davis provides a biblical theology of authority and real-life examples of how he and others have embraced their spiritual authority to advance the kingdom of God. In essence, it is a manual for overcoming spiritual opposition in everyday life.



Binding and Loosing: Exercising Authority Over the Dark Powers by K. Neill Foster and Paul L. King, published by Honeycomb House Publishing LLC, 2018

What do believers do when faced with "impossible" situations? What if our arsenal of spiritual weapons contained both an

offensive and defensive weapon—a weapon to bring victory over the powers that war against Christ and His Church? The biblical duo of binding and loosing is such a powerful weapon.

In this 20th anniversary edition of *Binding & Loosing*, the authors combine sound biblical and theological scholarship with decades of practical and effective real-life experience to present the proper and wise exercise of this spiritual authority, according to Matthew 16:19—when it is appropriate and when it is not. Study guide included.



Sorting Out the Supernatural: If it Happens in Church, Is it Always of God? By K. Neill Foster, published by Christian Publications, 2001

“The author calls believers to learn discernment from revealed truth. Anything less will compromise the gospel and grieve the Holy Spirit. Sorting out the supernatural is not an impossible task.”
—taken from the Foreward.



Soul Care: 7 Transformational Principles for a Healthy Soul by Rob Reimer, published by Carpenter’s Son Publishing, 2016

Brokenness grasps for the soul of humanity. We are broken in body, soul, and spirit, and we need the healing touch of Jesus. This book explores seven principles that are profound healing tools of God: securing your identity, repentance, breaking family sin patterns, forgiving others, healing wounds, overcoming fears, and deliverance.

Podcasts

- [Healing and Restoring Healing to Disciples](#)
- [Culture, Covid, and Causation – Renewal](#)
- [Resting in God’s Love – Soul Care for Mission workers](#)

Website

- Rob Reimer, [Renewal International](#)

Workshop

- Holy Spirit Encounter, Soul Care

Tip 5

Your Kids are No Surprise to God

by Rebecca Brown

I was raised as a third culture kid (TCK) and loved growing up overseas. Yet, as my departure drew close and I faced the reality of uprooting my children, taking them far away from grandparents and other family members, leaving the Canadian school system behind and losing the amenities of my city, like the zoo and great public libraries, I started finding my heart believing the lie that I wanted the best for my children, and the best was found exclusively in my passport country.

Our passport countries indeed have much to offer, and it is easy to get caught up in defining the 'best' as the most academic or modern. When we move overseas, we give up many good things for our children, but we also gain so much for them. Whether you describe them as TCKs, global nomads, cultural chameleons, or hidden immigrants, the worldview and international experience you will give your child comes with many benefits! TCKs are natural bridge builders, adaptable, culturally savvy, and often bilingual (maybe even multilingual!) world citizens who will grow up with a global network of friends. Imagine the incredible opportunities before them!

One of the greatest comforts I found as I prepared to depart with my small children to an unknown life was that God hadn't called me alone. The existence of my children was no surprise to Him. I could be confident God had called my whole family to this new context, and I could trust in His goodness and His faithfulness and know He would provide for all of us – each exactly what we needed.

There are a bunch of great resources and books to read about helping TCKs thrive, and they are worth the read, but here are **three practical tips** to keep in mind as you're just starting your overseas journey as a family:

1. **Talk to your kids** about upcoming transitions and new experiences. Change may feel scary, and trying to protect them from change might be tempting, but the only thing scarier than change is the unknown factors coming with it. So please don't shy away from answering their questions. For smaller kids who have a more challenging time thinking abstractly, make up a story

about their upcoming adventure and tell it to them. I've done this with my kids, and they love it – in fact, I had to tell them these stories more times than I had bargained for, but I find when I take the time to do this kind of preparation, the ventures into the uncharted go much more smoothly!

- 2. Don't hide your full range of emotions** from your kids. It's tempting to put on a brave face and only speak positively as you approach your upcoming departure and even once you land, but your kids need to see how it isn't easy for you either. They need to see all the feelings they are feeling inside mirrored in you and how it is ok to have mixed feelings. They need to feel free to grieve their losses and be interested in exploring their new surroundings.

Our kids are still young and don't have a robust vocabulary when it comes to the range of emotions. We have found keeping an emotions chart handy



is a great way to check in and talk about how we are all feeling in the lead-up to a change or during a turbulent time. We each take a turn pointing at the faces that match our feelings. I often try to pick several faces when it's my turn so my kids understand it is normal to feel conflicting feelings.

- 3. As you learn about the rhythm of life in your host country, think about what aspects you want to embrace and which routines you want to keep from your home culture.** The biggest question is, "What will help our family thrive?"

We moved to a very late-night culture with our toddler and infant. Although our language skills might be better if we joined the community gathering each night starting around ten, we opted to observe our North American early evening bedtime. This gave our kids the rest they needed to cope in their new context and language, and it gave us evenings to connect with each other, Zoom with supporters back in Canada, and have some rest. Of course, we made exceptions for dinner invitations and other special occasions, but our routine was to observe a seven-thirty bedtime. As our kids grow older, we may adopt a later bedtime in order to engage more with our local community. Don't feel pressured to adopt every new way of life – it's okay to guard your home and make it a place that meets your family's needs.

One final thought about raising your children overseas – **raising children takes a lot of work!** It's time-consuming! You may wonder if it's even worth being overseas because so much of your time is spent caring for your home and your children rather than being in direct ministry to the locals. However, how you love and treat your children reflects God's love for His children. They'll see His love modelled in how you function as a family. And no matter where you live, be it in the West or the middle of nowhere overseas, raising your children will likely be your largest Kingdom contribution. It's worth your time and attention – so don't apologize for prioritizing it! And who knows, maybe you are raising another global worker, like I am.

Resources

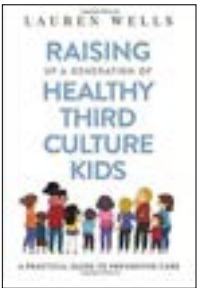
Books



Third Culture Kids: A Gift to Care For by Ulrika Ernvik, published by Familjeglädje, 2019.

Third culture kids are global nomads who have moved between cultures many times and therefore are a part of many cultures. Their beauty and challenge in life are integrating and embracing all their experiences into a life story that reflects who they are. Using interactive and reflective activities to accomplish this, the whole brain and body are involved in the processing.

Deeper relationships are built as families and groups do the activities together. Young and adult TCKs, parents, teachers, sending agencies and others who care for TCKs can all find meaningful activities that bring understanding, integration and joy.



Raising Up a Generation of Healthy Third Culture Kids by Lauren Wells, published independently, 2020.

If we could ensure that our TCKs would grow up healthy and resilient, we would do it in a heartbeat. Lauren Wells has gifted us with a gentle guide and a preventive health primer, unique in the field of third culture kid literature. This book is a goldmine of wisdom, organized in a practical and readable format. While we cannot know all our TCKs will go through, we can take a giant step forward by learning how to multiply the benefits of a global life and conversely pay attention to the challenges that can become stumbling blocks to healthy development. If you are working with,

raising, or loving third-culture kids from any part of the globe, this book will give you practical ways to be proactive about how you raise third-culture kids.

Podcast

- Michèle Phoenix – [The Pondering Purple Podcast](#)

Videos

- Gordon Smith – [How Did Growing Up as a Third-Culture Kid Impact You?](#)
- Becky Matchullis – [Growing up as a third-culture kid](#)
- [Keys to Parenting Through Relocation Transition](#)
- [Raising a Family in Another Culture: Benefits and Fears](#)
- Kathy Klassen – [Third-culture kid](#)
- Hans Fung – [TCK education options](#)
- Derek Burnett – [Family as a platform for ministry](#)

Websites

- Becky Matchullis – <https://www.beckymatchullis.com/>
Michèle Phoenix – <https://michelephoenix.com/>

Tip 6

Know How to Survive in Another Culture

by Ronald Brown

What are my cultural habits and are they suitable for the culture I am going into?

I met Sarah Lanier in France many years ago and she gave me her book *Foreign to Familiar*. I have found it the most helpful for understanding different cultures. She has lived in numerous countries and travels internationally as a consultant and lecturer on culture.

What Lanier does is divide the world into two halves: hot-climate cultures and cold-climate cultures. You then figure out where you are and then figure out where you are going into.

Here are **six culture touch points you need to understand** if you are going to live successfully in another culture.

1. Relationship Versus Task Orientation

Relationship - Hot Climate Cultures

- Are relationship based.
- Communication creates a 'feel-good' atmosphere.
- Though the individuals may be otherwise, their society is feeling-oriented.
- Efficiency and time do not take priority over the person.
- It is inappropriate to 'talk business' upon first arriving at a business meeting or making a business phone call.

Task - Cold Climate Cultures

- Are task oriented.
- Communication must provide accurate information.
- Though individuals may be otherwise, society is logic oriented.
- Efficiency and time are high priorities and taking them seriously is a statement of respect for the other person.

2. Direct Versus Indirect Communication

Indirect Communication - Hot Climate Cultures

- It's all about being friendly.
- Every question must be phrased in such a way as to not offend by its directness.
- Use a third party for accurate information if you sense that a direct question will be too harsh, or not get the results you are seeking.
- A 'yes' may not be an answer to your question; it may be the first step in beginning a friendly interchange. Or verbal compliance may be required by the culture. Therefore, avoid yes-or-no questions.
- Avoid embarrassing people.

Direct Communication - Cold Climate Cultures

- Short, direct questions show respect for the person's time, as well as professionalism.
- A 'yes' is a 'yes' and a 'no' is a 'no'. There are no hidden meanings.
- An honest, direct answer is information only. It does not reflect how the person feels about you.
- You can say what you think (nicely), and it will usually not be taken personally.

3. Individualism Versus Group Orientation

Group-Oriented - Hot Climate Cultures

- I belong, therefore I am.
- My identity is tied to the group (family, tribe, etc.).
- The group protects and provides for me.
- Taking initiative within a group is greatly determined by my role.
- I do not expect to have to stand alone.
- My behaviour reflects on the whole group.
- Team members expect direction from the leader.

Individualistic - Cold Climate Cultures

- I am a self-standing person with my own identity.
- Every individual should have an opinion and can speak for themselves.
- Taking initiative within a group is good and expected.
- One must know how to make one's own decisions.
- My behaviour reflects on me, not on the group.

4. Inclusion Versus Privacy

Inclusion - Hot Climate Culture

- Are group-oriented cultures.
- Individuals know they are automatically included in conversations, meals, and the other activities of the group.
- Possessions are to be used freely by all: food, tools, etc.
- It is not desirable to be left to oneself.
- It is rude to hold a private conversation or make plans that exclude others present.

Privacy - Cold Climate Cultures

- People enjoy having time and space for themselves.
- People are expected to ask permission to borrow something or to interrupt a conversation.
- Each person is considered to be the steward of his or her possessions and has the responsibility to maintain and protect them.
- In a community setting, it might be common to label one's food, tools, etc. to set them apart from the group's common possessions.
- It is acceptable to hold private conversations or make exclusive plans with a few people, not including everyone.

5. Different Concepts of Hospitality

Hot Climates

- Hospitality is spontaneous, often without an advance invitation.
- It is the context for a relationship (even a business relationship).
- Hospitality usually takes place in the home.
- The host fully takes care of the needs of the guest. The guest pays for nothing.
- A gift is usually expected.
- Food and drink are involved.
- Travelers are taken in and provided for.

Cold Climates

- Hospitality is taken very seriously and is planned for.
- It is usually not as spontaneous. The host usually needs advance notice of a visit.
- Travellers are expected to make their own arrangements other than what has been specifically communicated to the host ahead of time.

- Guests need to expect to pay for their transportation and restaurants if visiting in North America. If hosts plan to pay, they usually will say so.
- Hospitality is a special occasion, taking the full attention of the host.

6. Different Concepts of Time and Planning

Hot-Climate Cultures

- Are not as oriented toward the clock as cold-climate cultures.
- Are event-oriented.
- Are spontaneous and flexible in their approach to life.
- Respond to what life brings.
- Consider saving time not as important as experiencing the moment.
- Recognize structure is required in some areas of life (the military, for example).
- Have informal visiting as part of the event.

Cold-Climate Cultures

- Are time-oriented.
- Are structured in their approach to life.
- Enjoy using time efficiently.
- Try to plan their day, and saving time is a value.
- Expect the event, dinner, the arrival of a guest, or a meeting to begin at the time announced. Visiting or informal chatting happens before or after the event.

Next Steps

1. Look for a 'cultural interpreter', a person who can explain the culture to you, a fellow foreigner who has already transitioned well into this culture may be a better coach than a local person.
2. Search the internet to find resources other foreigners have found useful in a certain culture.
3. Learn something about the history, religion, and background of your country and people group.
4. Before departing, if possible, find people from the culture who can inform you about their homeland.
5. Learn phrases in the local language.
6. Go, listening and observing.

A useful quote that has stuck with me over the years was from the Wycliffe anthropologist, Dr. Marvin Mayers, **“Build a bridge of trust strong enough to bear the weight of truth.”**

So, do locals and your new work associates trust you yet? How strong is your bridge? Have you worked hard enough to build trust in your new relationships – it does take time. Understandably, this likely doesn’t happen within a week or a month’s visit in another culture.

Resources

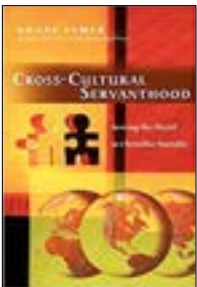
Books



Cross-Cultural Connections – Stepping Out and Fitting in Around the World by Duane Elmer, published by InterVarsity Press, 2002

“...In this day and age people from different cultures and racial backgrounds are intersecting with each other more frequently now than ever before. This thought-provoking, insightful and practical book delivers excellent biblical references to support key principles. A must-read for Christians or non-Christians, local churches, Christian colleges and universities, mission organizations, and those connected to the marketplace.”

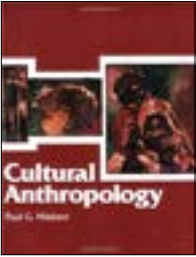
- Alvin C. Bibbs Sr., director, Extension Ministries, Willow Creek Community Church



Cross-cultural Servanthood – Serving the World in Christlike Humility by Duane Elmer, published by IVP Books, 2006

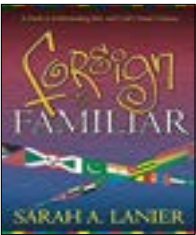
A clear, well-written, and eminently practical book for training people going into missions at all educational levels. With vivid examples and an easy-to-follow format, Elmer lays out what it means to live and work as a servant of Christ in a different cultural context... Elmer’s solid grounding in scripture and frequent use of personal experience, coupled with his engaging writing style, leave the reader wanting more....

- Robert Danielson, Missiology 35/1, January 2007



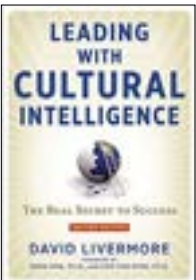
Cultural Anthropology by Paul G. Hiebert, published by Baker Book House, 1988

This introduction to the field of cultural anthropology from a Christian perspective exposes students to the excitement and significance of human history and culture.



Foreign to Familiar: A Guide to Understanding Hot- and Cold-Climate Cultures by Sarah Lanier, published by McDougal Publishing 2010

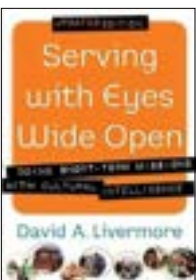
This is a well-researched work on cultures. Lanier's love and sensitivity for people of all nations will touch your heart. This book creates within us a greater appreciation for our extended families around the world and an increased desire to better serve them.



Leading with Cultural Intelligence: The Real Secret to Success by David Livermore, published by Amacom, 2022

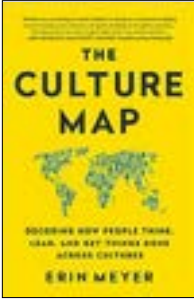
Livermore will help you learn about:

- Drive - boost your motivation for and confidence in interacting with other cultures.
- Knowledge - understand the relevance of differences in religion, values, norms, and languages.
- Strategy - plan ahead for unfamiliar cultural settings, but remain flexible if actual experience differs from expectations.
- Action - successfully adapt your behaviour to each situation.



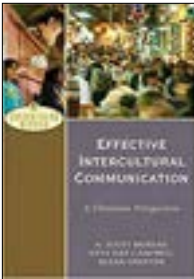
Serving with Eyes Wide Open: Doing Short-Term Missions with Cultural Intelligence by David Livermore, published by Baker Books, 2012

Become a more effective cross-cultural minister by opening your eyes to global realities and Western assumptions about short-term missions.



The Culture Map: Decoding How People Think, Lead, and Get Things Done Across Cultures by Erin Meyer, published by Public Affairs, 2016

Meyer provides a field-tested model for decoding how cultural differences impact international business. She combines a smart analytical framework with practical, actionable advice for succeeding in a global world.



Effective Intercultural Communication: A Christian Perspective by Scott Moreau et al, published by Baker Academic, 2014

This is a comprehensive and well-researched volume to sharpen and strengthen communication skills. Theory is applied to real-life situations.



Global Leadership Perspectives: Insight and Analysis by Simon Western and Eric-Jean Garcia, published by Sage Publications, 2018

The first part presents the local and regional variations in leadership from across the globe, with each of the twenty individual authors presenting the histories, cultures, tensions and social changes that shape the practice of everyday leadership in their respective region.

In the second part, the editors then critically analyze these chapters and identify the key themes and specific issues, enabling the reader to challenge their own leadership perceptions and move beyond the normative, uncritical approach to leadership.

Video

- <https://watch.rekindle.tv/en/c/shifting-global-christianity-and-implications-to-future-ministry-part-1.323>

Website

- <https://erinmeyer.com/tools/> to map culture and compare

Tip 7

Develop a Theology of Risk and Suffering

by Rebecca Brown

I had just graduated from university and signed up for a two-year apprenticeship in Niger, West Africa. Tickets were bought, I was in the final stages of packing, and I was ready to go. Then, one of my last nights before I left, the CBC ran a news story on a Canadian diplomat who had just been returned after being captured and held in the desert by Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) for the better part of a year. *Wait a second; this man was kidnapped from the city I was moving to? Why hadn't anyone told me about this? Would I be safe? Was it too late to put on the brakes?*

Five months into our first term, we were awoken in the early morning hours by banging on our door. My husband and toddler went to answer the door while I gathered up our baby and followed them. My husband was gone when I reached our front entryway, and a teammate held my daughter. A man on our team had just returned from his morning run, and as he reached the apartment building where we all lived, he collapsed. My husband joined the CPR efforts, and I welcomed the man's wife into our home to wait.

Another teammate appeared in our doorway. My husband wanted his stethoscope. The wife of our collapsed teammate fell to the ground in distress and began to wail, begging God not to take her husband from her. I stood between her and my toddler, my baby in my arms. I was caught between comforting my wide-eyed daughter and comforting my grieving friend. I was completely inadequate.

As believers, no matter where we live or what our profession is, we know we will face trials of many kinds. John 16:33 tells us, "In this world, you will have trouble." Intellectually, we understand there is more risk and an expectation of

suffering when we choose to follow the call overseas. Sometimes it is pushed to the back burner behind the excitement and the practical preparations of moving. Maybe, deep down, we are looking forward to the bragging rights coming from 'roughing it.' Perhaps it feels like our family is more focused on the potential risks and challenges than we are, and we find ourselves telling them, "It's going to be fine! Don't worry so much!"

Developing a solid foundational theology of risk and suffering before you go is a key component of workers who will last. It goes hand-in-hand with longevity. We need to expect to suffer. We need to have a realistic understanding of the risk we are stepping into. There was a time when it was very popular in Christian circles to say, "God is good, all the time," and to be met with the response, "All the time, God is good." It's a great mantra, but it's one we cannot just pay lip service to – it is something we must sincerely believe is true. We must believe God is sovereignly good in all He does and what He allows to happen. Christ set the example – He didn't shy away from suffering and put Himself at great risk for the sake of the world.

In the hardships we have faced overseas, **I am learning to change my prayers from "Why God? Why would you let this happen?" to "How will You redeem this? How are You using this? Where are Your fingerprints in this mess?"** Sometimes we can find tangible examples of His work right away. Sometimes it takes some distance from the crisis to look back and see the redemption borne from it. Sometimes we must continue to believe that nothing is wasted and that He is sovereignly good in all things.

"How you go through the risk is just as important as going through the risk," says Anna Hampton (www.globalmissionspodcast.com/143). She encourages us to consider how we walk through risk (and suffering, too) and to **see it as an act of worship**. Risk tolerance varies from individual to individual, and we all process and work through grief and disappointment differently. Our response to our family, teammates, and neighbours should be one of grace and pointing toward our faith in God.

So, what can we do before we launch to prepare ourselves for the risk and suffering we will face?

First, develop your theology of the sovereignty of God. Do I truly believe God is good in both times of blessing and struggle?

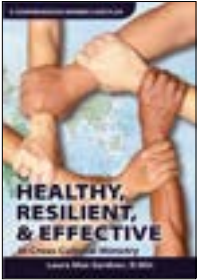
Second, learn about the risks you are stepping into and the kind of suffering you might experience. Think about how you can both mitigate them but also how you might approach them with a posture of faith and worship. Release them to the Lord.

Third, make it a habit to abide in Christ and spend time with Him – He is the source of our peace. Determine what margin you will need and what healthy practices you can implement in your life to make sure you have the capacity to cope well.

“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world, you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” John 16:33

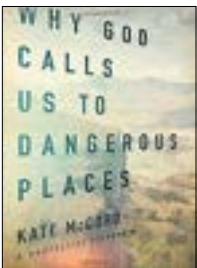
Resources

Books



Healthy, Resilient & Effective in Cross Cultural Ministry: A Comprehensive Member Care Plan by Laura Mae Gardner, published independently, 2022

This book will help leaders of sending agencies and churches to create a comprehensive care plan for their members in mission. The first nine chapters give an overview of the why and how-to of setting up a member care plan for cross-cultural workers. The following nine chapters discuss in depth the challenges cross-cultural workers are dealing with and what member carers (church, friends, agency) can do to assist them and, even more importantly, how to avoid unnecessary crises and suffering.

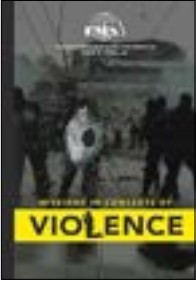


Why God Calls Us to Dangerous Places by Kate McCord, published by Moody Publishers, 2015

Soon after 9/11, Kate McCord left the corporate world and followed God to Afghanistan—sometimes into the reach of death. Alive but not unscathed, she has suffered the loss of many things: comfort, safety, even dear friends and fellow sojourners.

But Kate realizes that those who go are not the only ones who suffer. Those who love those who go also suffer. This book is for them, too.

Weaving together Scripture, her story, and the stories of both those who go and those who send, Kate considers why God calls us to dangerous places and what it means for all involved.



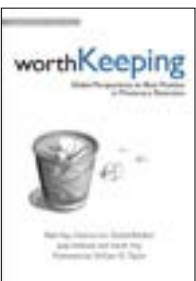
Missions in Contexts of Violence (Evangelical Missiological Society Series Book 15) by Keith Eitel, ed., published by William Carey Library, 2007

In an age of increasing concern for this type of missionary work, the missions community needs to hear from those who have reflected on the multifaceted elements involved in understanding the phenomenon of martyrdom-persecution violence related to telling the age-old gospel story. The place to begin is with biblical and theological analysis followed by the grounding provided by constructing consequent lifestyles, strategies and practices in physically risky settings. Finally, insights from the live settings of violence are warranted.



Trauma and Resilience: Effectively Supporting Those Who Serve God by Frauke Schaefer and Charles Schaefer, eds., published by Frauke C. Schaefer, MD, Inc, 2016

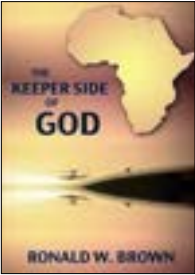
This book brings together theological perspectives; personal stories; and spiritual, psychological, community, and medical resources. It is research-based and, at the same time, practical. This is a handbook for church and mission leaders, peer supporters, counsellors, those in personnel and member care roles, as well as those who suffer. It is also an excellent resource for training courses about the topic.



Worth Keeping; Global Perspectives on Best Practice in Missionary Retention (Globalization of Mission Series) By Rob Hay et al., published by William Carey Library. 2007

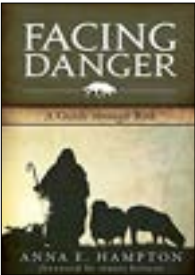
“*Worth Keeping* is more than worth just reading. I urge church and missional leaders to reflect on the research and absorb the principles contained in this important volume. I am convinced if we put into practice its recommendations, we will see more effective missionaries who feel valued as servants of the living God. *Worth Keeping* should be required reading for all mission leaders and local church mission teams.”

- Geoff Tunnicliffe, International Director, World Evangelical Alliance, Canada



The Keeper Side of God by Ronald Brown, published on [lulu.com](https://www.lulu.com), 2014

At any given time, many countries are involved in ethnic wars, on the brink of a coup d'état, or in turmoil of one kind or another. Working in these settings are human resources associated with non-governmental organizations, relief and development agencies and missionary organizations. One result of populations at war is the sudden displacement of people through political evacuations. This study identifies and analyzes factors of retention in Western missionaries in Africa who have experienced evacuation trauma yet have been able to continue in their missionary calling.



Facing Danger: A Guide through Risk by Anna E. Hampton and Stuart Briscoe, published independently, 2020

Facing Danger is a holistic guide through risk. It integrates a biblical discussion on risk with working through emotions, decision-making, and stewardship responsibilities accompanying dangerous work. Included are practical steps of risk assessment and management. The twelve risk myths of cross-cultural work in dangerous places are very helpful.

Documents

Ron Brown: [Ministry despite trauma](#)

Podcast

Dick Brogden [Building Resilience for the global task](#)

Videos

Marion Dicke: [Developing a theology of suffering](#)

[How do I start developing my theology of suffering?](#)

Karen Carr: [What contributes to resiliency in global workers?](#)

John Powell: [Vocational Resilience](#)

Duncan Westwood: [Developing Resiliency in Global Workers](#)

Websites

MMCT: [Stress and Resilience](#)



Part B: After Arrival

Tip 8

Read the Room

by Ronald Brown

When I watch *Shark Tank*, I've often heard Mark Cuban say, 'Read the room' to a person who is frustrated and trying to figure out his next step. However, it is clear to the others in the room that the bargaining has ended.

I was a Canadian in Central Africa. I was a missionary pastor joining Congolese pastors at a conference. It was time for the afternoon break, and we all went outside to stretch our legs and get some fresh air. As I strolled and casually talked with a friend, he reached down and took my hand. I froze. I've never before walked hand in hand with an adult man. My gut reaction was to remove my hand. A slower reasoning response was to consider what message this is conveying – if I continue, what message; if I withdraw my hand, what message?

Then I started to read the room. There were various couples of men strolling hand in hand around us. I relaxed – this must be what men friends can do in this culture without any sexual connotation. My Canadian hand was still in great discomfort, but as a Kingdom messenger, I was trying to learn and fit into my new culture – I had to pay the price of this discomfort. What was the message – well, I was now considered an insider, one of them. I felt happy about that.

What else do I learn when reading the room?

- 1. With whom can I shake hands?** I came out of a North African airport, and a group of workers (three men and one woman) met me; men reached out to shake my hand and welcome me. I put my hand out towards the woman, and she put her hand up to her heart and said we don't shake hands in this culture. I felt shame for not already knowing this. Men don't touch women in certain cultures. That lesson stands me in good stead now with my Muslim women friends in Canada.
- 2. How should I dress?** In one country where I worked, I had an American colleague who just dressed in old jeans and work boots. We both worked with African pastors. They viewed the ministry as a profession and dressed

accordingly, often in a dress shirt with a topcoat, never jeans and always well-polished dress shoes. In my mind, his dress seemed to belittle our profession. In most of the African countries I've lived in, even with 30°C heat, men would rarely, if ever, wear short pants in public. Shorts were for the evenings with a T-shirt at home.

"I have the freedom to dress how I want." Well, not really; if you want to fit in and be taken seriously in another culture with its standards that you need to discover – read the room.



3. Do I take my shoes off in this house, this church, this building? What do you see around you?

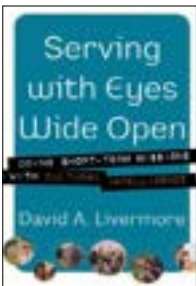
4. Where should I sit at a meal table? Don't quickly grab the nearest chair; read the room, and watch the host. He may look around at the guests and place them in some order closest to where he sits at the head of the table; it could be an age preference, older closer to head, or most senior visitor closest. Stand back until invited to sit.

5. Why does the waiter keep filling my glass with water? I'm no longer thirsty. Read the room. The waiter's job is to fill glasses. If a person doesn't want to drink more, he leaves the glass full.

6. With which hand do I give something to another person, or does it make a difference? Read the room. In some settings, it is impolite to use your left hand.

Resources

Book



Serving with Eyes Wide Open: Doing Short-Term Missions with Cultural Intelligence by David Livermore, published by Baker Publishing Group, 2006

Short-term mission trips are great ways to impact God's Kingdom. Yet they can lack effectiveness because of mistakes or naiveté on the part of participants. You can become more effective cross-culturally by opening your eyes to global realities and Western assumptions about short-term missions, whether domestic or overseas.

Websites

- Check out cultural fluency

Tip 9

Do Less and Do Better

by Rebecca Brown

“Come join us for breakfast!”

I was hurrying home from the grocery store, laden with plastic bags, my mind already running through my to-do list for the morning before the kids came home from daycare. A family that runs a small convenience shop a few meters down the road from the hospital where we often buy treats for the kids were waving me over and offering their food.

I smiled and waved back, calling out my thanks and apologizing profusely. “Maybe another time?”

As I hustled around my kitchen, putting away groceries and prepping lunch, my mind kept wandering back to their invitation. A sense of regret set in. “Did I just throw away a unique – maybe even divine – opportunity to connect with this family?”

It’s a universal truth that living cross-culturally is exhausting – especially in those first few months, maybe even the first year. In fact, you might even experience a period of grief where you find yourself mourning your previous levels of productivity. In your home culture, you can probably whip through a to-do list in a morning. Now, it feels like your productivity has screeched to a halt. It takes all your energy just to get through the day, and you’re wondering why you are exhausted at 8 pm. It’s frustrating to leave behind the productive person you were and look in the mirror to see this person who barely made it through a language class and maybe managed to put together your meals for the day!

And then, almost without realizing it, **you will struggle to set boundaries** and figure out what you can say ‘yes’ to and what to say ‘no’ to. In my memory, it felt as though it happened overnight! I would like to tell you I have the secret to setting the perfect work/life balance, but like every other international worker out there, I am living day-to-day, doing my best to lean on the wisdom of the Spirit

to show me His divinely appointed connections. Often, I wonder if I'm getting it wrong. So be encouraged! No one has mastered the art of boundaries, but here are some things to keep in mind as you figure out how to walk your tightrope!

First, in those early days, maybe before you even arrive, define what you will consider a "Minimum Successful Day." This boils down to identifying the essentials needing to happen in your day. It might simply be eating three meals that day, connecting in some way with your spouse and children – if you have them – and connecting with God in some capacity. It might not include showering, language study, or tidying the house. Of course, this won't be every day, but if you have decided to accomplish these essential tasks as your daily threshold, you can call the day a success. The alternative is feeling discouraged these are the only things you accomplished in a day. Even the most seasoned missionaries will have a minimum successful day from time to time!

(Of course, if these Minimum Successful Days are not becoming less frequent over time, you should consider reaching out for more support.)

Second, as you find your footing and start being approached with responsibilities beyond surviving and language learning, keep in mind that the demands of so many of these things will ebb and flow. There will be weeks over-run with responsibilities and others where you'll feel like what you're doing wouldn't constitute a full-time job. Life overseas is not a nine-to-five job! So cherish those weeks that are naturally a little slower and allow yourself to rest.

Lastly, the best advice we were given is to aim only to make two, maybe three, good local friends. This took us by surprise initially. We serve in a collectivist culture; therefore, any friend you make is not just one person – you are essentially making friends with their full extended families. We are expected to attend family weddings and engagements and share meals with them, especially during the big holidays. Having more than two or three friends and their families would be too much for us to do and to do well. If you find yourself in a similar context, free yourself from needing to surround yourself with too many surface friendships and focus on developing a few deep relationships. Think quality over quantity. Once you've established those relationships and feel you have more capacity, you can consider adding more.

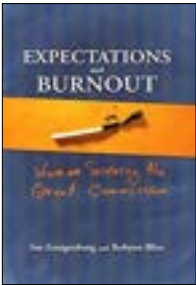
Perhaps our biggest pitfall is that we, as Western international workers tend to be task-oriented – whether it is because of the culture we come from or our individual personality bent – yet we often serve in relationship-oriented cultures. **It can be a real struggle to release the self-imposed pressure to get things done and embrace what feels like a slower pace of life that leaves room to prioritize relationships.** There are so many great books that can be read, such as "The

Unhurried Leader” or “The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry.” But often, I think our only hope of succeeding in this is to start each day surrendering our to-do list to Jesus and asking the Spirit to attune our hearts to His and open our eyes to see the divine appointments He has for us each day. We won’t always succeed, but it is a worthwhile pursuit!

“Discipleship, we might say, is a way to curate your heart, to be attentive to and intentional about what you love.” (p. 2, Smith, 2016)

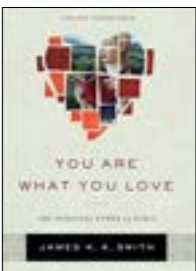
Resources

Books



Expectations and Burnout: Women Surviving the Great Commission by Sue Eenigenburg and Robynn Bliss, published by William Carey Library, 2010

Missionary women have high expectations when they respond to God’s call; of themselves, their mission agencies, host cultures, churches, co-workers, and even of God. Unfortunately, these expectations are often impossible to fulfill, leading to mental and physical exhaustion. This book provides research and surveys from the field and personal experiences to demonstrate how burnout can happen and how God can bring life from ashes. Explore how to develop realistic expectations and maintain faith in our sovereign God, who continues to accomplish the impossible.



You are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit by James K.A. Smith, published by Brazos Press, 2016

Who and what we worship fundamentally shapes our hearts. And while we desire to shape culture, we are only sometimes aware of how culture shapes us. Smith helps readers recognize the formative power of culture and the transformative possibilities of Christian practices. He explains that worship is the “imagination station” that incubates our loves and longings so that our cultural endeavours are indexed toward God and His Kingdom. This is why the church and worship in a local community of believers should be the hub and heart of Christian formation and discipleship.

Tip 10

Preventative Health is Important

by Rebecca Brown

If you're wondering about your health, you're most likely thinking about what kind of access you have to emergency medical facilities and what you'd do if your child got desperately sick. While these things are incredibly important, preventative health is an essential aspect of life overseas that shouldn't be overlooked. Do you need to become an athlete as well as an international worker? No, but thinking about how your habits relating to your physical health support and contribute to your overall well-being overseas is a worthwhile investment.

Your baseline stress level overseas will be higher than your life in your passport country. This is because you're operating outside of your cultural norms and functioning in a second or third language – just getting through a regular day takes more effort and energy. Therefore, establishing dietary and physical fitness routines that address stress will benefit you greatly.

Food

Of course, food is a common concern when moving overseas – we hear about the strange-to-us things that people are served while overseas and the accompanying digestive issues. These are things you'll face. But most of the time, you'll be eating in your own home and can control what you consume and how it's prepared. Ask your teammates what they do foodwise – where do they buy food? Do they wash their vegetables in a bleach or vinegar solution? What water filtration system do they use? What restaurants do they feel confident eating at? What is their approach to street food? While you can be adventurous, you may want to start slow as your body adjusts to the new microbes it is encountering in your new home.

Meal planning will also be your best friend when you first move overseas – whether it's something you have done before or want to try for the first time, planning out your meals for a week at a time will help ensure that you have the ingredients you need to make your healthy meals without a last-minute trip to the market – especially when you're still in the stage where even a planned trip to the

market feels overwhelming.

It also reduces the decisions you must make in a day. In those first months, you might already feel fatigued by decisions, so if you can spend half an hour each week planning out your meals, you'll save yourself the need to make yet another decision on a day that might already feel full of small decisions that feel harder than they should! It may sound simple, but it's a great way to help keep that low-grade stress at bay and ensure you're nourishing your body!

Rest

You'll be tired – living cross-culturally requires a lot of energy, especially when everything is new. You may feel burdened by the to-do list or feel like you should be doing more but permit yourself to rest as much as you need to. As your body is adjusting to new routines and foods and germs, it will need more rest to maintain health. Rest is an excellent antidote to stress!

Exercise

If you're already an exercise enthusiast, that's great! If you haven't already, you'll want to reach out to your teammates and find out what exercise looks like in your new home – especially exercising in public. Can a woman go for a run in the street? Are there decent local gyms? Are there accessible pools if lane swimming is your thing? What kind of clothing would be appropriate for these activities?

If fitness outside the home is limited, many great home workouts are available on YouTube that will help you stay fit in your living room. Perhaps you'll need to bring some home gym equipment from Canada, such as resistance bands or an inflatable Pilates ball.

If fitness isn't your thing, don't feel pressured to become a competitive athlete, but you should be thinking about how you – and your family – can find ways to include movement in your day that supports your health but also brings you joy. Moving our bodies is another great way to combat that ever-present stress in the international worker's life.

In my youth in West Africa, my family often walked through our neighbourhood after dinner together. It was a great time to connect with each other, stretch our legs and explore our corner of the world. In my current context, we created a makeshift pickleball court. As a community, we play a weekly game of pickleball – we're building our sense of community and cardiovascular endurance together!

Think Preventative

Your primary care physician and sending agency will thank you if you focus on

the easy preventative things you can do to invest in your health – wear sunscreen, avoid direct sun exposure, wear sunglasses, drink enough water, and be active! We don't need to become marathon runners, but we do need to be healthy to live well and engage in our ministries overseas!

Our health is a gift, and we should steward it well!

Resources

Podcasts

- Third Culture Thriving – [Easy Meal Planning Wherever You Are](#)
- Third Culture Thriving – [Quick and Easy Health Tips Anywhere You Are in the World](#)

Tip 11

Learn About Money Matters

by Ronald Brown

One of the hardest things to figure out is how to live in a setting where you are likely the richest person around from one of the world's wealthiest countries. As a result, the expectations of you are suddenly much higher than when walking around Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan.

There is always a hand out towards you. What should you do? How should you respond? How can you live here without constantly feeling guilty about how much you have?

I remember hearing about missionary Herb Niehlsen who was an Alliance business agent in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire. He was always out in the town buying supplies, visiting government offices, and getting things done. Of course, everywhere this foreigner travelled, there were beggars waiting for him. So, when he left home each morning, he had money in two front pockets, mission money in one and personal money in the other. By noon, after helping many beggars along the way, he could truly say his pocket was empty. I'd like to help, but I have no more money in that pocket. This worked – it was believable. He didn't shame anyone, and he knew in the country, there was no shame in asking.

During our African years, we provided work in exchange for money. So, though we maybe didn't need four people working for us, we knew we were providing salaries that paid school fees, provided food for maybe ten mouths in a household, and the workers could hold their heads high, could afford new clothes; they worked and earned a living. One guy was the gardener and kept up the yard, another was the night watchman guarding our place as we slept, one was a part-time cook, and another was a house cleaner coming in a couple of times a week to wash the cement floors.

What about bribes? No, we don't bribe. We give tips ahead of time to get a job done. In a Canadian restaurant, I give a 15% tip after a job has been done (if it is a new Canadian, my soft heart moves me, maybe towards 20%). But in African countries where I lived, the practice is the opposite; it is to give a tip to get something. There, the salaries were often so low it was expected that you survive

on your tips. If I want a government agent to sign a document for me, I'll slide a bill (tip) along with my paper.

In my African setting, there were police officers on most corners. They were minimally paid, and the understanding was that they would collect money by stopping motorists and charging them with infractions. We all understood the system. So, the whistle blows, I stop, he asks to see my documents – now they are in his hand, and he says I rolled through the stop sign. What to do? I can argue and say don't be silly. I can say, well, take me to the office and charge me. I can give him some "coffee money," and he hands back my documents. We smile and greet warmly, and life moves on (relationship maintained). I feel good, and he can feed his family.

Now again, read the room, and figure out what works in your new setting.

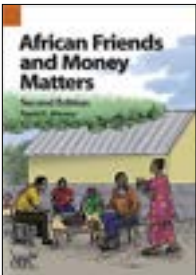
Resources

Books



When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty Without Hurting the Poor . . . and Yourself by Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert, published by Moody Publishers, 2014

Poverty is much more than simply a lack of material resources; it takes much more than donations and handouts to solve it. This book shows how some alleviation efforts, failing to consider the complexities of poverty, have actually (and unintentionally) done more harm than good. It encourages us to see the dignity in everyone, to empower the materially poor, and to know that we are all uniquely needy. It provides proven strategies for effective poverty alleviation, catalyzing the idea that sustainable change comes not from the outside in but from the inside out.



African Friends and Money Matters: Observations from Africa by David Maranz, published by SIL International, 2001

Africans and Westerners use and manage money and other resources in very different ways, and these differences create many misunderstandings and friction. The author introduces the different goals of African and Western economic systems and then presents ninety observations of African behaviours related to money matters. Drawings by two African artists add further clarity to the text as they capture Africans and Westerners in

authentic situations. The result is that the reader is able to make sense of customs that at first seem incomprehensible.

Check out this [review](#).

Podcast

Third Culture Thriving – [Navigating Money Requests](#)

Tip 12

Be Confident God Placed You There for a Purpose

by Rebecca Brown

Another day, still no patients. We'd been told of the great need for pediatricians at our hospital in North Africa. We'd heard stories of how many families waited daily to receive medical care for their children. We'd uprooted our family to move halfway around the world, spent nine months learning Arabic, finally arrived at the hospital, settled into our new home, and my husband had set up his clinic room. And yet, day two came and went, and he'd seen zero patients. By the end of his first week, his patient count was three.

Other expats at the hospital commiserated with us and told us this hospital so often was 'not as advertised.' They offered to speak with our sending agency and help us find a new hospital to serve in, one that truly needed my husband's medical expertise. In those first few weeks, it was so easy to wonder, *Was there really a need? Did we have a purpose in being here?*

Committing to moving overseas to serve in missions is a big deal. Goodbyes aren't easy. Life is less comfortable. Language learning takes work. It is tempting to think that if you have jumped through all the hoops to serve overseas, the red carpet will be rolled out upon your landing, and your arrival will be met with gratitude and excitement. **But, in reality, it might feel like no one even noticed you showed up.**

As you work your way through the process of being sent, you will likely hear people talk about "your call." Maybe you have a distinct story of your own, or perhaps you feel like it is this elusive thing you're grasping at. Understanding the call on your life is key – whether it's a story you love to share or whether it is just a firm belief that God has a heart for the nations and you're willing to go to partner with Him in His work among the unreached. **Understanding your call and being confident God has placed you somewhere for a purpose, is a truth you will have to come back to time and time again.** There will be many moments where you

wonder, *Why am I here? Do they even want me?*

Hopefully, you will receive a warm welcome from your teammates. However, more than likely, they will be balancing all their ministry tasks with hosting you and helping you land well. In all probability, you may find your hand isn't being held as much as you'd like. It is worthwhile having a conversation before your departure, either with your team leader or someone in a regional leadership capacity, about what to expect regarding orientation and mentorship when you land, so you can express your hopes and go in with mutually shared expectations. Once you are on the ground, don't hesitate to advocate for yourself and to ask for what you need. Each new worker will have a different threshold for support – there's no right or wrong amount of support required – but your new teammates won't know what you need if you don't ask.

Additionally, there is no need to rely solely on your teammates. You may find someone in the greater expatriate community who is a good mentor and happy to show you the lay of the land. Having multiple sources of insight will be beneficial.

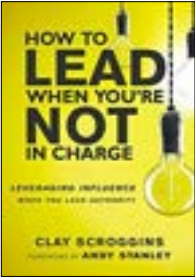
As you meet locals, **keep an eye open for someone you connect with who has the potential to be a good language helper as well as a cultural interpreter.** Having someone from the local language and culture will be key in helping you adjust well and also help you feel connected to your new home and the rhythms of their lives.

“Slow is fast, and fast is slow.” This mantra is usually taught in security training, but its truth can be broadly applicable. It's easy to imagine you'll land in your new home, jump into meaningful work, and quickly absorb the local language. However, you will more than likely place expectations on yourself that aren't realistic. **So give yourself permission to move slowly, absorb everything you're learning, and rest as you need to – transition is tiring!** Those first few months may feel like you aren't doing enough, but soon it will snowball, and you'll be thankful you took the time to build a foundation. There is no wasted time in God's economy!

As you trudge through those first few months, where you might feel like you're contributing nothing and you feel underappreciated, unseen, or maybe even unwanted, remember to **“hold tight to the why, but be loose with the what”** (Scroggins, 2017, pg. 204). There will be days of discouragement, so cling tightly to your why and remember the One who called you is faithful. He is with you, and He will show you where He wants you to join Him in His work at just the right time.

Resource

Book



How to Lead When You're Not in Charge: Leveraging Influence When You Lack Authority by Clay Scroggins, published by Zondervan, 2017

One of the greatest myths of leadership is that you must be in charge in order to lead. Yet, great leaders—whether they have official authority or not—learn how to be an influential presence wherever they are.

Scroggins explains the nature of leadership and what's needed to be a great leader, even when you answer to someone else.

Drawing from biblical principles, his experience, practical wisdom and humour, he will help nurture your vision and cultivate influence with integrity and confidence, even when you lack authority in your organization or ministry.



Part C: Along the Way

Tip 13

Use a Wellness Plan

by Ronald Brown

The world is a needy place. When we arrive, there are so many demands calling for our attention. Stress can build. Guilt can form for not meeting demands we can solve. Trying to prioritize takes time and effort. We feel bad for saying no to certain things. We don't like not meeting the expectations of others, especially the people pleasers! How do we say 'yes' to maintaining a growing relationship but mean 'no' to the request?

For those reasons, global workers must pay attention to our mental health. We need a plan to maintain our health in a foreign land for the long haul. Otherwise, the risk for many is that they become overwhelmed and soon leave.

Here is a *Wellness Plan* developed by Beth Cook. We encourage you to fill it out and review it regularly. It might be wise to send it to your accountability partner.

Wellness Plan

God's Call on My Life

The Greatest Commandment:

The most important one, answered Jesus, is this: Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: Love your neighbor as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these. (Mark 12:29-31)

Love the Lord your God: I resolve that my love relationship with God will be the core and foundation for all of life and ministry (encompasses both the receiving and giving of God's love). To that end, over the coming year, I resolve to:

With all your heart: I resolve to express my love for God through emotional wholeness. To that end, over the coming year, I resolve to:

With all your soul: I resolve to express my love for God through spiritual growth. To that end, over the coming year, I resolve to:

With all your mind: I resolve to express my love for God in my thought life, and through cognitive and vocational growth. To that end, over the coming year, I resolve to:

And with all your strength: I resolve to express my love for God through the care of my physical resources. To that end, over the coming year, I resolve to express my love for God through wise stewardship of financial resources. To that end, over the coming year, I resolve to:

Love your neighbour as yourself: I resolve to express my love for God through my relationships with others. To that end, over the coming year, I resolve to:

Date completed or revised:

(Signed) _____



Global worker Mike Sohm recently retired and wrote this in his biography (*ON MISSION: Stories of Those Who Went*, Volume 6):

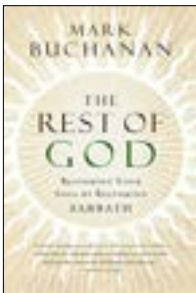
Regular Patterns for Nurturing Your Relationship with God

Over the years, I have developed daily, weekly, quarterly, and bi-annual disciplines.

- **Daily**, I meditate on a verse or short passage, take a posture of listening for 10-15 minutes, journal, and pray for those on my list for the day. I have often incorporated music, primarily hymns.
- **Weekly**, I do two things. First, I read over my plan and look honestly at how the past week has gone and where I need to give some attention in the week ahead. Then, later in the day, I begin my weekly Sabbath, which has morphed over the years from a “day off” to something quieter and more contemplative. When I travel, I often have to carve out a half-day somewhere to be quiet, read, reflect, and often take a nap.
- **Quarterly**, I would review my activity, how I used my time and my overall well-being. For example, I often saw a link between a lack of rest or inconsistency in spiritual disciplines and an increase in stress. Extensive travel with not enough downtime also had a negative impact on overall well-being and relationships at home.
- **At least twice each year**, I would take a two-day retreat to be quiet, take long walks, pray, rest, read my Bible and do something in the area of spiritual formation.

Resources

Books



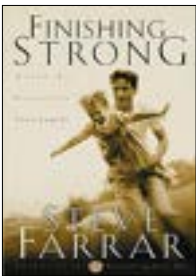
The Rest of God: Restoring Your Soul by Restoring Sabbath by Mark Buchanan, published by W Publishing Group, 2006

Many of us have endless demands and stifling daily routines. Learn why Sabbath is essential to our full humanity and faith, a rhythm of work and rest set by God that will bring prolonged life, enriched relationships, increased fruitfulness, and abundant joy if restored to our lives.



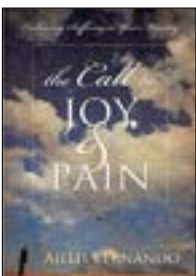
Finishing Well: The Adventure of Life Beyond Halftime by Bob Buford, published by Zondervan, 2011

Author Bob Buford called them “code breakers.” They are people age 40 and older who have pioneered the art of finishing well in these modern times and can teach us to do the same, starting today. Buford sought out 60 of these trailblazers, including Peter Drucker, Roger Staubach, Jim Collins, Ken Blanchard, and Dallas Willard, and has recorded their lively conversations in these pages so that they can serve as “mentors in print” for all of us.



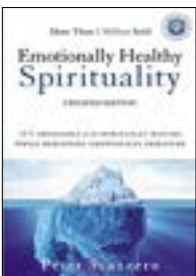
Finishing Strong: Going the Distance for Your Family by Steve Farrar, published by Multnomah Books, 2000

It doesn’t matter if you’ve had a great start in the Christian life or a rough one. It doesn’t matter if you’ve stumbled time and again or even fallen flat on your face. What matters most in this all-important race of life is how you finish. This book offers lively use of Scripture, contemporary illustrations, and study questions.



The Call to Joy and Pain: Embracing Suffering in Your Ministry by Ajith Fernando, published by Crossway, 2007

Biblical, theological, and devotional insights and advice on how joy and pain are both integral parts of the life of service.



Emotionally Healthy Spirituality: It's Impossible to Be Spiritually Mature, While Remaining Emotionally Immature by Peter Scazzero, published by Zondervan, 2017

A road map for discipleship with Jesus that is powerfully transformative. Scazzero shares new stories and principles in this updated edition as he outlines his journey and the signs of emotionally unhealthy spirituality. Then he provides seven biblical, reality-tested steps to become emotionally mature.

Podcasts

Mark Buchanan – [GlobalMissionsPodcast49](#)

Mike Bowden – [GlobalMissionsPodcast105](#)

Tip 14

Finesse Your Communication Skills

by Rebecca Brown

Being an international worker requires you to become a jack of all trades. You'll find yourself doing things you never expected to do! Whether or not you enjoy public speaking or writing updates, **finessing your communication skills is a critical component** of the worker's life.

I've met many people who dread the end of the month or week – whatever their self-imposed deadline is for getting out that update email. Rather than dreading it, I hope you can embrace it and use it as a regular reminder of God's faithfulness and a moment to pause and look for His fingerprints in the ordinary. Your job in updating your support base isn't to wow them with big numbers or incredible stories, but rather it is to **disciple them in their understanding of God's heart for the nations**, to share how you see God moving in big but also small ways, and to include them in your work as you live overseas as an extension of your supporting church.

Stories are key when engaging an audience, and the best advice you might receive regarding what and how to share. Rather than detailing what you have been up to, share a story that impacted you. Short truly is sweet, so don't feel compelled to write a novel, but share a short story of how you saw the Spirit at work or saw a prayer answered. This will draw in your readers and help them better understand your overseas work.

Update your supporters regularly and frequently. With the ease and affordability of email, some workers opt to send weekly emails rather than monthly – both are good – the key is that they get sent. **Don't feel bound** to send updates on the same day every month; instead, send updates when you have something to say. You may find yourself having something to share three weeks after your last update, and other times, it may be closer to five weeks, but if you're averaging a monthly email – pat yourself on the back. For example, we aim for a monthly update, but when we started having visa issues and faced deportation, we communicated much more frequently to keep our prayer supporters updated on the ever-changing situation!

Of course, you have heard the saying, **“A picture is worth a thousand words.”** So lean heavily on photos – you might want to consider making your whole update a series of pictures with a paragraph under each picture as a format for sending updates. Images help your supporters better understand what your world looks like. It also helps those who only take time to skim. Some want the highlights rather than reading through a page of text.

Many of us shy away from asking for money. We cringe at the thought. If a goal of your communication includes fundraising, be encouraged to share clear and defined fundraising goals. A donor wants to know what they are giving towards and how great the need is. **Avoid nebulous, vague asks** for support and, instead, provide a specific goal with clear instructions on how to give. It may feel uncomfortable for the asker, but the donor will appreciate it.

Lastly, **personalize** where and when you can. If you’re using an email platform such as Mailchimp, you can subdivide your mailing list into individual churches. For example, I have broken down our mailing list into six separate lists so I can include a screenshot of an elder praying for us during the service or a comment on a milestone the church is celebrating. These additions might be specific to one church but not of interest to the rest of the people on our mailing list. This also allows me to send a ‘thank you’ email to a specific church after we have spoken there on a weekend. It takes a little extra work – and you don’t have to personalize each update – but when there are opportunities, it goes a long way toward **communicating that your relationship with that church is a two-way street** and you care about what is going on there.

Get creative. Use social media where you can. There are many ways to communicate – don’t let the options overwhelm you; choose what works for you and do it well. If you’re communicating God’s heart for the nations, authenticity in the ups and downs of your life, and expressing gratitude for those praying for you and supporting you financially, you are succeeding at communicating well.



Resources

Book



Enjoying Newsletters: How to Write Christian Communications People Want to Read by Amy Young, published independently, 2019

Whether on social media, newsletters, or reports, writing is a part of your ministry life. What if improving as a writer allows you to communicate with friends, family, and co-workers more effectively? What if becoming a better writer is more straightforward and fun than you remember from school? Viral communicator Amy Young is the perfect person to guide you through the maze. She shares all she has learned in her twenty-plus years of writing and ministry with encouragement, practical tips, and plenty of humour. Learn to write compelling letters, communicate quickly, connect to the heart, and bring better support. These simple tricks will turn your monthly letter-writing from a chore into a pleasure.

Podcasts

- <https://globalmissionspodcast.com/046/>
- thirdculturethriving.com/podcast – Episode 87 – [Writing Newsletters that Don't Suck](#)

Website

- Funding Your Ministry – https://navresources.ca/product_details.php?item_id=1524

Tip 15

Continue to Learn

by Ronald Brown

Lifelong learning takes us beyond the formal classroom into self-motivated education through books or videos, online or in-person classes through a local college or training facility, one-on-one with a tutor, or training courses and workshops provided by our sending agency. Through the internet, we also have access to many great resources. Lifelong learning is about being open and taking in new ideas and perspectives.

Incorporating this type of learning into your life offers you **many long-term benefits**. For example, learning a new skill can renew your motivation, bringing personal satisfaction. It can get you out of a rut of doing things the same way all the time and inspire you to do things in a better way. It can reduce boredom, making what you do more exciting and help you to reach your goals quicker and easier. It can often reveal interests you never knew you had.

While we're learning new skills, we're also learning more about creativity, problem-solving, critical thinking, and ways to adapt. We also become more skilled at what we do; our self-confidence increases personally and professionally. Lifelong learners often see change as something positive, and it helps them to grow in problem-solving while learning new skills and encountering people with different ideas. An open mind enables you to evaluate other ideas and change your mind, if necessary, helping you grow in your understanding.

Sometimes our learning takes us outside of our comfort zone, which can benefit personal growth, opening us up to learn things we may not have considered before.

While there are many benefits to lifelong learning, you may find it can also be time-consuming and exhausting, so it's essential to **celebrate achieving each milestone** so you don't become discouraged. For example, going out for a special meal or treating yourself to something you enjoy can help motivate you to persevere when you feel like stopping. Likewise, not being content with what you already know can be a powerful motivation for continuing your education.

Your example can encourage others to become lifelong learners, and seeing

others inspired by your example can motivate you to continue your education.

We recommend the following excellent resources as you continue your lifelong pursuit of learning.

Resources

Blogs

[A life overseas](#)

[Velvet Ashes](#)

[Taking Route + Podcast](#)

Books



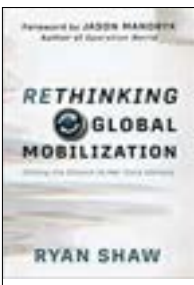
Christian Mission – A Concise Global History by Edward Smither, published by Lexham Press, 2019

The author weaves together a comprehensive history of Christian mission, from the apostles to the modern church. In each era, he focuses on the people sent by God to the ends of the earth while also describing the cultural context they encountered. Smither highlights the continuity and development across thousands of years of global mission.



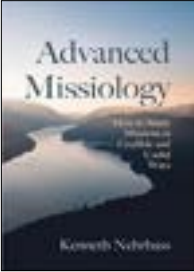
Theology of Mission – A Concise Biblical Theology by J.D. Payne, published by Lexham Press, 2022

Payne shows that God's mission is on every page of the Bible and is foundational to the church's existence. With reflection questions following concise chapters, all readers can consider their place in God's work.



Rethinking Global Mobilization – Calling the Church to Her Core Identity by Ryan Shaw, published by Ignite Media, 2022

Providing biblical, theological, missiological, theoretical, practical and historical reflections, *Rethinking Global Mobilization* addresses needed paradigm shifts in mission mobilization while providing a strategic framework for a local ministry, organization, church network, and national church to be dynamically engaged in mission mobilization among their people.



Advanced Missiology – How to Study Missions in Credible and Useful Ways by Kenneth Nehrbass, published by Cascade Books, 2021

Advanced Missiology draws the connections between the theory and practice of missions.



Regeneration – Stories of Resilient Faith in Communist Romania by Miriam Charter, published by Word Alive Press, 2020

This is a book of stories about ministry in the underground church of communist Romania (1980s). It introduces a never-ending story about the regenerative process of true discipleship, which reaches today to the second, third, and fourth generations. These stories will inspire deeper reflection on challenging missional issues that the next generation of international workers will undoubtedly encounter.

Also see the books mentioned on pages [67-68](#)

Courses

- **Rocky Mountain College** online courses: <https://rockymountaincollege.ca>
- **The Kairos Course:** KAIROS is a foundational course on world Christian mission. It brings out God's heart for all the nations of the world and His desire to use His people to be a blessing to them. KAIROS emphasizes the importance of ministering to cultures that still have few or no indigenous churches. <https://simplymobilizing.outreach.ca/>
<https://vimeo.com/385258275>
- **The Perspectives Course:** Perspectives isn't a course solely about world missions. It's a study program rooted in Scripture, clarifying each believer's remarkable opportunity to join God in His global purpose. <https://perspectivescanada.outreach.ca>
- **The Momentum Course:** *MomentumYes* has been referred to by some as Kairos Lite. It is a free series of videos that invites everyday people into God's mission. <https://momentumyes.com/individuals/>
- **The Upstream Collective:** Pre-field training for marketplace workers <https://www.theupstreamcollective.org/helipad>

- **Grow2Serve** from multiple training providers <https://www.missiontools.org/>
- **Ambrose University:** <https://ambrose.edu>
- **The Alliance Centre for Leadership Development:** <https://www.allianceleaders.org/programs-courses>

Podcasts

- <https://thirdculturethriving.com/podcast>
- <https://globalmissionspodcast.com/>
- <https://www.takingroute.net/podcast>
- <https://www.jdpayne.org/tag/strike-the-match>

Websites

- **The Jaffray Centre at Ambrose University:** <https://jaffrayglobal.com>
- **Writings and podcasts of J.D. Payne:** <https://www.jdpayne.org>
- **Third Culture Kids:** <https://more.outreach.ca>
- **Employment global:** <https://www.scatterglobal.com>
- **Canadian Missiological Resources:** <https://www.cmresources.ca/>
- **The Global Vault:** <https://globalvault.ca>
- **The Global Vault Academy:** <https://globalvaultacademy.wordpress.com>

Tip 16

Finish Well

by Rebecca Brown

“Seven days,” the official at the visa office said. We had jumped through the two-day process of renewing our visas again. Aside from being time-consuming, the process had seemed smooth up until this point.

“Okay, we should return in seven days to pick up our visas?” we clarified.

“No, seven days,” he repeated, handed us our passports, and ended the conversation. As we ran through the conversation again in our minds, confirming that we had understood his Arabic correctly, I thumbed through my passport. I stopped.

There, marring a page in my passport, was an indelible stamp. “Um, this says we need to leave the country in seven days,” I held it up to show my husband.

“What?” Neither of us could believe it!

We’d barely been in the country a year. We’d muddled our way through language study. We had spent so much time sheltering in place thanks to the onset of the COVID-19 global pandemic. It felt like we were just getting started, and now it would all be over in one week. This outcome hadn’t even crossed our minds when we entered the passport office that morning. We felt stunned, overcome with disbelief. Had all of this been for nothing?

If you took a missions history course, you likely learned about the great missionaries of old who packed their worldly possessions into their coffin and shipped it overseas, prepared never to return. Missions was a lifelong commitment. Even though the world has changed significantly since those days, there is still a deeply instilled idea that if you sign up for missions, this is the rest of your life. Being prepared to devote your life to sharing the gospel is great, but let’s remember a few things:

First, the world is volatile. Mission strategy has turned its focus to the most challenging places remaining – the least-reached areas of the world. Missionary

visas are less popular. Even if you're prepared to put down roots and live in your host country for decades, you may be deported. It may become unsafe for you to stay, and your missions agency may ask you to come home or relocate. We must hold our timeline with open hands.

Second, God has been at work in your host country long before you arrive, and He'll continue to be at work long after you leave. He is inviting you for a period to join Him in His work. Whether you see abundant fruit in that time or not, nothing is wasted in His economy. He will use you in ways you can identify and in ways you may never learn about this side of Heaven.

Third, a call away from the overseas ministry is not a failure. You may be called away from serving overseas at some point for one or more reasons – whether it be a health issue, aging parents, children's schooling, other kid-related reasons, or simply you feel God calling you out of your posting. You will not have failed if your service was shorter than you expected.

Lastly, the goal of missions is to work yourself out of a job. Should the country or people group where you're working develop a strong, locally-led, indigenous church, your job there is done. At this point, it will be time to consider another location or return home.

So, with these thoughts in mind, how do you even start your overseas ministry?

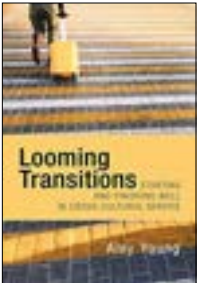
- Do your best to **balance** holding your timeline with open hands and approaching language and cultural learning as though you will spend the rest of your life there. No matter your anticipated timeline, putting down roots and investing will never be a waste of time.
- **Cultivate** a small group of people who pray and discern with you. Discerning the will of God should not be a solo activity. Your call might be an individual thing but, more than likely, your community of faith around you will affirm it. As you set out, you will want a faithful core of prayer warriors who will follow your life and your work closely. These people will also be vital in helping you discern if and when God is calling you out of this season and into something new. So, when you're in a valley of frustration, maybe wishing God was calling you out, you'll have this group to encourage you and hear the directive voice of God.
- **Remember** your faithfulness to the One who sent you is more important than any statistics you feel you should be reporting to your supporters. In John 15:5, Jesus tells us, *"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."*
- Finally, **love** one another. Jesus continues in John 15:16-17, *"You did*

not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit – fruit that will last - and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. This is my command: Love each other.” Your actions of love are what the world around you will see – a tangible expression of the Father’s love for them. Love your spouse, your children, your teammates, your neighbours, and your local church. Love them well. Even before your language skills reach a point of being able to eloquently pray and effectively share the Good News of Jesus Christ, your outpouring of love to those around you can be evident to all.

When it comes time to move on, whether it’s to another country or returning home for a new season in your life, you can be confident His words to you will be *“Well done, my good and faithful servant,”* if you have remained faithful to Him and have well-loved those He has placed you among.

Resources

Book



Looming Transitions: Starting and Finishing Well in Cross-Cultural Service by Amy Young, published independently, 2017

When you go abroad to serve, you think about the language, the losses, and the excitement. When you return home, you think about your friends and family, the losses, and the relief. Most aren’t thinking about the transition process—yet if you do, it can make the difference between a smooth entry and re-entry or a decidedly bumpy landing. Practical in nature, this book places a strong emphasis on 1) Keeping your soul fertile as you stay grounded in Christ; 2) Looking for the lighter moments; 3) Learning about yourself; 4) Helping others; 5) Making lists; and, 6) Leaning into grief as you prepare for your transition.

Canadian Alliance Missions Engagement

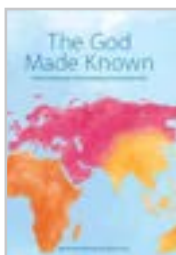
Books that tell our story



The God You May Not Know: Ordinary People Leading Extraordinary Lives, edited by Ronald Brown and Charles Cook.

In *A God You May Not Know*, Ron and Charles provide a compelling collection of true-life stories. This autobiographical material by people who have "been there, done that" is both informative and inspirational. As Alliance missionaries, when they tell their stories, they are telling our story. They provide a window through which you catch a glimpse of our mission.

Mel Sylvester, President of C&MA in Canada, 1980-1992



The God Made Known: Through Ordinary People Leading Extraordinary Lives, edited by Ronald Brown and Charles Cook.

The God Made Known should be required reading for anyone ministering or leading within our Alliance churches, as well as for anyone looking to be inspired and encouraged by God's hand and provision in the joys and deep challenges of reaching out to the nations with the Good News of Christ. How does God work in the world? For some insight, read through the pages of this compelling history.

Clyde Glass, Lead Pastor, Southview Alliance Church, Calgary



Making God Known: To Least-Reached People In Extraordinary Ways, edited by Ronald Brown and Charles Cook.

This book tells our story.... As with any good family narrative, you'll also discover connections and explanations about people and initiatives that were previously unknown to you. It is like reading a collection of family stories. This book chronicles how our denomination got the gospel message out to people and places where Christ is unknown. It recounts how it all came together and the people who made it happen in a world where there was war, uncertainty, chaos, and upheaval....

Pamela Nordstrom, Ph.D., Vice President, Academic Affairs, Ambrose University

To download a zip file containing a FREE PDF of these three books, click on the link below and the download will start immediately.

<https://www.cmacan.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Book-Series-CMA.zip>

ON MISSION Series



ON MISSION: Stories of Those Who Went, Volumes 1-3, 6 edited by Ronald Brown

These three books contain the stories of more Canadian Alliance international workers. They celebrate the redeeming work of God and at the same time provide some accountability to the people of God who faithfully provided sons and daughters, finances and prayers, for the mission of God.

They describe how missionaries in obedience to God's call engaged in His redeeming activities all over the world by going to some of the toughest and most difficult places. They persevered, some under horrible conditions, having survived traumatic events, in order to see communities of faith established amongst least-reached peoples.

Today, we rejoice, that in many nations of the world there are vibrant congregations, small and large, that are living out the gospel in their communities.



ON MISSION: Caring for Those Who Go, Volume 4, edited by Ronald Brown

The chapters in this book show how the international worker's sending church, team leader, agency office, and member care provider can all better lean into their roles; namely, being the presence of Jesus walking alongside the workers and "keeping" them as they carry out the Great Commission.



ON MISSION: Why We Go, Volume 5, edited by Ronald Brown and Mabiola Justin-Robert Kenzo

Today, this very concept of "going on mission," can quickly evoke a variety of competing thoughts and emotions and is exactly why this work is perhaps more important than ever.

Knowing clearly why we go, how we go, and what issues must be considered as one goes is absolutely crucial in the life of every Christ-follower and their obedience to both Christ's example and command.

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On mission

ROAD TO GOING GLOBAL

The authors share stories and experiences from their combined 58 years of international living in seven countries. They have also individually travelled and visited 51 countries on six continents, seeing the cultures of the world and have each struggled to learn three languages.

This primer provides sixteen tips they wish they had known sooner and many helpful resources for those preparing to go ON MISSION.

Ronald Brown & Rebecca Brown

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