

What It Takes to Be a Missionary

At heart, you're an idealist.

You daydream about traveling to new countries and being a witness to those around you. In your mind, you play the scenarios of seeing the darkest and most unlikely soul come to faith in Jesus Christ.

You may even daydream about being the next apostle Paul, traveling to different countries, equipping and training young believers.

You think of starting churches in the hardest and darkest places. You wonder what it will take to get to the mountain village that has never heard of Jesus. Or you imagine yourself holding children who have never felt a warm embrace.

These dreams are fueled because you're tired of hearing that some people are going to hell, and you want to do something about it. Not only that, but ultimately, you want to reach the world for Christ because you want to glorify His name.

You may think that in order to fulfill those dreams, you only need passion and trust that God will open the doors for you to go somewhere.

You may even end up going, with all your youthful zeal, but if you're not sure what it takes to be a missionary, you may find yourself disillusioned by loneliness, despair and crushed dreams.

This happens all the time. Missionaries go out with hopeful dreams only to see none of them come to fruition. So how do we prepare to stay on the field for a lifetime of impact and avoid a premature return?

Here are five traits it takes to be a successful missionary:

1. Vibrant Spirituality

Cultivating a heart for God and the power of the gospel is foundational for every believer. This happens through digging deep into the Word, prayer and community.

The prophet Jeremiah said, "But if I say, 'I will not make mention of Him nor speak any more in His name,' then His word was in my heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones; and I was weary of forbearing it, and I could not endure it'" (Jer. 20:9).

The ministry God gives you will flow out of your relationship with God. A lack of spiritual vibrancy will end up in fruitless ministry. Why? Because you can't take people where you've never been, which leads to the next point.

2. Ability to Make Disciples

If you want to be a missionary, not only do you have to be a mature disciple, but you also have to be able to make disciples. You have to train believers, young and old, how to be true followers of Jesus.

Discipleship is not just reading His Word but living it out. This means if you are to make disciples, you should know what it takes to train, empower and motivate people to keep following Jesus when times are tough.

3. Intercultural Skills

Forty-eight percent of the world has not heard of Jesus.

Don't miss this ... 48 percent of the world has not heard of Jesus, and they are in the hardest and darkest places.

The new places you may go are places where you will be venturing into unknown territory. Successful missionaries are

those who know how to dissect and socialize with a culture in such a way that they can clearly communicate the gospel.

Just imagine if you were speaking English to a person who only knew Arabic. No matter how hard you tried, they could never understand you. The same is true for culture.

Many times, young people go overseas and preach the gospel from a Western perspective (USA), which two-thirds of the world will not understand. Understanding someone's culture is just as important as being able to speak their language.

4. Willingness to Do Hard Things

In our culture, we have been sucked into a life of comfort. Comfort is the idol of the day in America.

In order to be a missionary, you have to be uncomfortable. You have to step outside of your comfort zone and try to interact with people you don't know.

You will have to sacrifice some pleasures (video games, hot showers, what you want to wear and more) in order to reach people.

Why? Because the apostle Paul says,

To the Jews, I became as a Jew, that I might win the Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law; to those who are outside the law, as outside the law (being not without God's law, but under Christ's law) that I might win those who are outside the law. To the weak, I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. This I do for the gospel's sake, that I might partake of it with you (1 Cor. 9:20-23).

The more you are able to give up your rights and do the hard things, the more successful you will be as a missionary.

5. A Strong Community

One of the main reasons people leave the mission field is a lack of community. You have to look at community in two areas:

The first is your community back home. These are the people and church who will be sending you and praying for you. If you don't have a strong community who financially and spiritually supports you, you will find yourself stressed out from trying to make a living rather than giving life to those around you.

The second is a community on the mission field. This one is tricky if you're in a place with no believers around. That is why it's important for you to go overseas with a team and find ways to stay in contact with those back home until you start making connections on the field.

You may read all of this and think, *I don't know if I'll ever be ready to go on the field!*

Fear not. You may not have what it takes now, but this is why at Bethany Global University, we strive to equip you for a lifetime of impact as a missionary.

No one is born with these traits; they grow into them. We are not the only ones who do this, but this is why BGU exists: to help you grow as a mature believer who takes the church to where it's not.

If this is something you would be interested in, check us out. Also, if you have some thoughts about what it takes to be a missionary, I'd love to hear them in the comments below.

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