

# Embracing Your Mission Journey to the Nations—

a guide and a process to get there

Steve Hoke and Bill Taylor

The key reason to develop a “perspective” as a global-vision Christian is to understand the world as God sees it. But a razor-sharp biblical perspective is not static, and you really cannot just stand by as a spectator. To see what God sees, and to value what God values, is so compelling and inviting that probably the most dangerous response is to do nothing. A true vision of the Triune Sending God’s mission thrusts you into the middle of all that He is doing throughout the world and all history.

*Global Mission Handbook: A Guide for Crosscultural Service* is built on three core phases, arranged in a logical and flexible sequence. It’s intended to help prospective cross-cultural servants chart (navigate, plan and pray) their journey to active engagement into global mission. It provides a pathway primarily for those who will be “goers,” but is also of crucial aid to the “growers”—the strategic mobilizers, church mission leaders, missionary trainers, mission agencies and support team colleagues.

If you are a “goer,” you seek to move out as soon and as wisely as you can into a more active role in global mission. If you are a “grower,” then you are committed to serving, investing, interceding for and supporting your sent friends. But, whatever role God opens for you, this shoe may fit you, whether you are in your twenties, thirties, forties, fifties or sixties...or older.

Within each major phase are several smaller footsteps. Sequence is not the critical issue; pursue the steps in any order, but be sure you keep them all before you. They are not markers that you accomplish and then stop doing. They are really converging courses of



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growth and obedience that you will pursue throughout your life. The point is to move into a path of obedience as a prolonged journey. Act boldly today, and walk purposefully to fulfill the vision God is giving you.

Before we engage the phases and specifics, we lay the groundwork by taking a careful “reading” of our times in our radically changed world, introducing some diagnostic tools for you, and presenting a profile of the prime, longer-term, cross-cultural worker needed today.

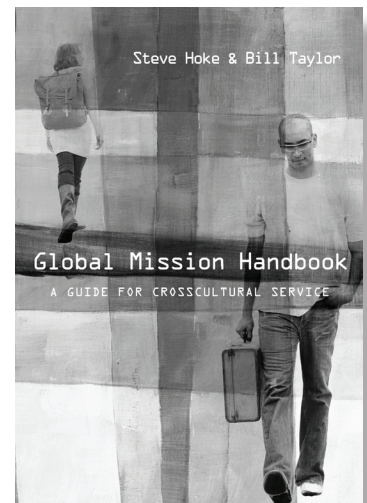
## PHASE ONE: Getting Ready

### 1. Personal Spiritual Formation:

Who you are—your character and spiritual formation as a disciple of Jesus Christ—is essential to your mission role. Solid first steps to ensure an effective journey include clarifying your basic commitment, your spiritual gifts, your ministry burden and passion, your call, and making sure your spiritual foundation is solid. Finding a personal mentor early on in this journey is crucial to your long-term effectiveness.



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## **2. *Body Life Design Team—Discovering Your Ministry Identity in the Body of Christ:***

Spiritual formation takes place primarily in communities of faith, not in isolation. Covenant relationships are vital for your spiritual growth and transformation. That is the spiritual home base from which you will launch cross-culturally. Understanding your church's unique vision, how it functions for missions, and finding your place and gifted role in it are key components to your ultimate effectiveness in cross-cultural service. Make disciples and learn to form communities of faith in your home culture. These will hone your ministry skills and help sharpen your spiritual giftedness before serving in a cross-cultural setting. Again, pray for, seek out and submit to fruitful elder women and men in your local church as mentors and kindred spirits who will encourage you along the life-long pilgrimage.

## **3. *Exposure to Other Cultures:***

We all increasingly live in multicultural contexts, challenged to understand others, appreciate diversity, and learn other languages. Gain early cross-cultural exposure, either locally or globally, and thus stretch your mental, physical and spiritual muscles. Countless numbers of churches and agencies offer one or 1-2-week exposure trips and 1-24-month short-term ministry experiences. Be wise in your short-term trips. They all can be significantly used by God, but remember that the best short-term trips don't substitute for the critical need for long-term missionaries. Strategic short-term mission and your intentional study will test your gifts, your passions, your dreams, and your capacity to go longer-term.

## **4. *Critical issues in Schooling and Support Raising:***

Academic preparation for long-term ministry needs to be customized to your experience and practical training, skills, and gifts and long-term dreams. How can you broaden your worldview and enrich your basic educational background, and perhaps get a key certification that will open doors and acquire visas in the future? Not everyone has to have a university degree to be used by God, but don't cut your formal schooling short just because you suspect God is running out of time or is short on money. College not only broadens your intellectual horizons; for many it's an intense course in developing relationships and in learning how to witness, work and live in community.

Check out the possibility of studying abroad and earn academic credit as you grow your world. Seek these opportunities especially in restricted-access

nations, where only visiting students or language learners are granted visas. This way schooling doesn't interrupt education but actually completes it.

## **PHASE TWO: Getting There**

### **5. *Church or Agency Connecting and Courting:***

What sending group or "team" is the best fit for you as the vehicle for service? It's not really about a solo career choice for personal fulfillment but about obedience to our Lord and bearing fruit. Start from your home base, your living, fruit-bearing organism of church life which partners your efforts with a mission agency.

What kind of team do you need to make you most effective and to help you grow the most? What kind of leadership do you need to keep you focused and effective? Many strong teams are intergenerational and multicultural. Since cross-cultural ministry is an intense crucible for character development, you want to join an experienced and caring group that is committed to your long-term spiritual, social and ministry growth and development.

You won't have difficulty finding strong churches and mission sending agencies with a wide span of cross-cultural ministry interests. Agencies range in size from very small to huge. Begin with input from your home church. Check out the agency's theology and history, model of ministry and vision, ethos and leadership. Evaluate their commitment to missionary

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development and care. Every agency has a personality, and you want to discover their chemistry or organizational culture before landing overseas. Talk with several until you find a few with whom you are compatible on the major issues.

Some agencies are very focused, for example, some plant churches among Muslim peoples while others serve the existing church. Some work with all the major blocs of peoples: Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, seculars, animists and post-moderns. Many have broad, holistic ministries, from business as mission to relief and development, to justice outreach, to literature and medical mission, leadership training and theological education. You are seeking a ministry family with shared values and ministry focus. Be sure your agency is committed to long-term church-planting.

### **6. *Ministry Role and Assignment Search:***

So what about your specific team, ministry, geography, assignment and role as you follow the sending and empowering Spirit of God? Who is this people

group? Where is this context? How can your passions, gifts and training be used within a team setting to see people come into transforming relationship with Christ, or where you can help build up the national church? Searching isn't "picking out what I'd like to do." Some of the best initial assignments may be made by discerning senior leaders. Early assignments are usually the times in which you discover who you really are and how flexible you are.

Almost all of us have been "divinely deflected" from our original job or career path.

But God was present, and while serving we found our life-mission. Other

best-lived lives were sometimes devoted to one task,

people or place through life. The key is to explore what God is doing as you seek to discover your place

in God's overall plan. When God's gifting and initial assignment become clear, are you willing and ready to step out in obedience as a committed team player?

### **7. Hands-On, Intentional Missionary Training:**

Let's assume you've completed your basic academic and skill-set training, and you've had serious on-the-job ministry training within a local church. By now you have had a rich variety of short-term mission trips, and perhaps as long as two years in a cross-cultural ministry experience. You've been stretched, and you've grown stronger and wiser as a result.

Now it's time to figure out what kind of intentional, practical missionary training and/or advanced equipping you're going to need. The kind of missionary role you will fill, and the particular continent, country or people groups among whom God wants you to minister, will focus the specific requirements. It requires time and serious ministry experience to develop competencies in three important dimensions: character and spiritual formation; growth in relationships and ministry formation (skills); and appropriate knowledge for the task ahead. Team-building, language and culture learning are also essentials of a cross-cultural servant's "Basic Training."

We cannot conceive of anybody going into, for example, the Muslim world, without serious study that prepares them for this kind of ministry. But too many people short-cut their preparation and pay for it later. How long should this season last? Perhaps from 6-24 months, depending on the future assignment.

The most relevant preparation for church-planting in another culture is participation in and significant responsibility on a team establishing Christian communities or planting a church at home. Starting evangelistic Bible studies, creating cell

groups, raising up leaders and discipling new believers to the second and third generation are critical church-planting skills.

## **PHASE THREE: Getting Established**

### **8. Apprenticeships and Internships:**

Effective missionaries don't just emerge fully-formed from their educational experience. Hands-on ministry either at home or in another culture tests what you've

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learned, provides models in ministry, and helps you develop your own approach for ministry. Once on the field, a structured internship is the best way for new missionaries to learn the ropes and the rules of the game in another culture. National pastors or experienced missionaries are the best on-the-job mentors to aid your effective acculturation. Apprentice yourself to a master craftsman or woman for maximum ministry learning in your first years on the field.

### **9. Life-Long Learning: On-the-Job, On-the-Field:**

When cross-cultural workers stop learning, they die. So plan to finish well by establishing a life-long learning pattern early in your career. Develop life-changing goals in yearly reading, self-study and personal development in the triad of spiritual, ministry and strategic formation. Being accountable to peers and to mentors is one way to insure that you are growing for all you're worth! Many will profit through ongoing degree-granting programs that upgrade skills and ministry viability. The key is to keep growing consistently, even as you grow in age and discover new gifts, needs and desires in yourself.

### **10. Finishing Strong and Well:**

God's pilgrimage is rich and vast, the journey is life-long, and you want to end your journey more in love with Jesus than when you started. Understanding the keys to life-long development and knowing how to intentionalize your spiritual development will help you grow stronger through cross-cultural service. Remember the three cluster issues that ensure long-term fruitful service: vital spiritual formation and growth, relating well to colleagues, and the right kind of pre-field training. Note, we don't assume that mission service is necessarily a life-long thing for you in the same place. The keys are faithfulness, integrity

and passion for God's mission through all of life, regardless of your geography or job.

Scripture and church history teach us that it is hard to "finish well." And a specific word to the "senders": be the kind of person who helps others to start well and then finish well.

### **Drawing to a Close:**

God is at work around the world fulfilling His Mission. Charting your journey means that you are intentional in joining the Triune, sending God. It means taking time to pray and listen and plan how you are going to get actively involved. It means taking intentional moves forward rather than being

shoved around sideways by the pressures of peers, culture and career.

Your own journey is unique and a life-changing process. These three phases and sub-steps will help you transform your newly gained "perspective" into a powerful vision for spiritual change. *Global Mission Handbook* challenges you to grow as you prepare for longer-term service, and includes space for you to keep notes, reflect, journal and gather information on the pilgrimage. You will find a key annotated bibliography and other resources in the back of the handbook.

You and the nations await each other. 🌐

## **Questions & Answers**

### **1. MF: For whom did you guys write this book?**

We wrote first for those who plan to enter longer-term cross-cultural work, i.e., the longer-term missionary candidates. We also wrote for local sending churches and mission pastors, for mission agencies and other sending organizations. We wrote for mission mobilizers, for training schools and programs. We wrote for *Perspectives* grads and the thousands who attend a church or other mission conference. After a course or conference, what happens? We wanted to chart a path that people could follow, to help them "get there" after being captured by God's heart for the nations.

### **2. MF: How does the book apply to *Perspectives* grads, or those who have attended an *Urbana* or *Passion* conference?**

In many ways the book was written expressly for the graduate of the *Perspectives* study course—men and women of all ages who are hearing God's voice to prepare for cross-cultural service. We have long felt that the majority of people who complete the course are at a turning point in their lives. Their worldview has now been stretched to the biblical horizons of seeing the Father's heart and purposes for the peoples of our globe. They have a strong sense of a deep drawing, a "second calling" if you will, to respond by engaging in God's global agenda.

This book seeks to mentor and serve for those people—men and women newly sensitized to God's plan. Now they want to take the initial steps of spiritual formation, church involvement, self-discovery of gifts and ministry passion, and onward it goes. The handbook serves as a companion

to individuals and couples beginning to navigate their journey to the nations.

### **3. MF: How would a mobilizer or mission pastor use the book?**

There are three essential ways in which mission pastors, mobilizers, those at training schools and other arenas can use this tool effectively:

- First, give copies to every person who seeks your advice on how to get involved in missions, but also...
- Second, after giving them a copy, offer to meet with them to walk with them through the process, grappling with key chapters or to dialogue with them about any questions that arise as they read.
- Third, the journal pages at the end of each chapter provide opportunity for the responsive reader to share their heart with a mission pastor or mission mobilizer. Any sensitive mobilizer can utilize the reflections of the candidate to inform them as to the kind of encouragement, advice or support the reader needs.

*Global Mission Handbook* is meant to be a mentoring manual for mobilizers and mission pastors to use with the committed and responsive people the Spirit brings into their lives as they consider the journey towards full-time, long-term, cross-cultural service.

### **4. MF: How does someone order the book?**

Perhaps the easiest and least-expensive way (if you want a volume order, then check with Bill or Steve) is at <http://amzn.to/apBery>