

SERVE AS A SENDER

It's pretty much the “duh” verse of the New Testament:
 “And how shall they proclaim unless they are sent?” —Romans 10:15

Maybe your niche...for now...is sending!

God seems to be raising up a whole new army of homefront believers whose lives are saturated with a passion for His global cause. With nearly 80,000 graduates of the *Perspectives* course mobilizing others in their fellowships, North American-based world Christians are increasingly catching a vision of their part in *sending*—much as in today's military, where every frontline combat soldier is backed up by nearly 100 support personnel.

Some senders focus on a **personal** missionary. Others' sending ministries are more **general**, serving the larger Body of Christ. Still other senders have taken on **vocational** roles in mission organizations, and as professional administrators, trainers, researchers and caregivers to send hundreds and thousands of missionaries.

Finding your niche in the sending teams of global missions might be as simple as reviewing your spiritual giftings and your SHAPE—spiritual gifts, heart, abilities, personality and experience. If you didn't work through those exercises in the *Find Your Niche* unit, consider taking now a quick *Spiritual Gifts Inventory* (www.buildingchurch.net/g2s-i.htm).

Is your sending ministry to be—for now—personal, more general or vocational?

● A PERSONAL SENDING TEAM

Senders team up to form the support base for a specific missionary with “behind-the-lines” backup in at least 10 areas of specialization:

- Financial Supporter
- Moral Supporter
- Logistics Specialist
- Prayer Coordinator
- Communications Specialist
- Financial Advocate
- Short-Term Teams Coordinator
- Seasonal Assistant
- Researcher
- Re-Entry Coordinator

Let's think through the practicalities of these roles:

Many of the roles of a missionary's sending team are carefully described in Neal Pirolo's excellent study *Serving As Senders* (see *Resources*). The point of the *Serving As Senders* study is simply that these sender-specialists are involved in crucial mission work as is a frontline missionary—although the homefront senders most often are involved on a part-time, volunteer basis.

WHAT DO SENDERS DO?

- **A Financial Supporter:**
 - Over 70% of North American missionaries are faith based, which means they must develop a team of financial supporters to partner with them in prayer and finances for the work that they do. This is the easiest way to get involved in a sending ministry BUT DON'T STOP HERE! There are many more ways to get involved than just through financial gifts. Keep reading about other ways to serve in the vital role of sending.
- **A Moral Supporter can:**
 - Send random messages of encouragement to a missionary via snail mail, email, in a video, during a phone call, with a cake....
 - Learn all the tiny details of the missionary/missionary family—birthdays, other special days, favorite foods, movies, books, hobbies, areas of interest, likes and dislikes. Then communicate these details to the rest of the sending team to surprise the missionary with exactly those special things on exactly those special days.
 - Serve as an empathetic listener, a confidante, the one who sincerely and regularly asks, “How are you today?”
- **A Logistics Specialist facilitates practical arrangements. He or she (or a team) can:**
 - Pack a missionary’s goods as she or he heads for the field.
 - Arrange a missionary’s travel to, from, and within the target area, including planning and handling contingency plans for emergencies.
 - Locate, get specs and costs of needed equipment and supplies, and then pack and ship the items.
 - Arrange travel for visitors or short-term groups to the target area.
 - Research communication options for the missionary—phone connections, Internet capabilities, etc.
 - Train other churches’ sending teams to handle logistics.
- **A Prayer Coordinator can:**
 - Pinpoint spiritual targets for intercession from information provided by the team researchers, mission agencies, and the missionary.
 - Inform prayer groups of these prayer points regarding the people group.
 - Enlist specific prayer warriors to intercede for the personal needs of the missionary.
 - Offer training in how to pray on a global scale.
 - Promote regular prayer for the missionary and the people group through announcements, take-home items, family devotional reminders.
 - Set an example of consistent prayer for the missionaries.
 - Promote periodic prayer events on behalf of the people group and the missionary.
 - Train other churches’ sending teams to coordinate prayer.
- **The sending team Communication Specialist(s) can:**
 - Establish lines of communication with the missionary on the field—via letter, fax, phone, amateur radio, e-mail, Internet audio/video, courier.
 - Work with the prayer coordinator to communicate to prayer groups and the entire fellowship the essentials of prayer requests, praise and the missionary’s concerns.
 - Regularly produce or edit and distribute a news-prayer letter on behalf of the missionary.
 - Promote regular and special opportunities for various ages of church members to communicate with their missionaries.
 - Communicate with other churches, mission societies, and missionaries who are working among

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WHAT DO SENDERS DO?

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that same people group.

- Submit articles, news releases, and prayer publicity to local, regional, or widespread Christian media to promote awareness of the targeted people group.
 - Train other churches' sending teams to communicate.
- **The sending team's Financial Advocate(s) can:**
 - Help plan the details of support raising, help present a financial plan to the church, organize advocates to network for the missionary's support. See the article [Support Advocacy](#) for an eye opener on how sending advocates can help missionaries beat the challenges of support raising.
 - If the missionary's agency doesn't provide these financial services, the advocate can monitor or initiate plans for appropriate insurances— medical, life, property, etc.—and taxes as well as retirement or re-entry finances.
 - Handle any of the missionary's financial matters while he, she or they are on the field.
 - Evaluate personal and ministry expense patterns, and advise on wise financial action.
 - Raise funds for the mission effort—pursuing grant funding, exploring secular financial sources, mounting an ongoing support appeal to the church.
 - Train other churches' sending teams to help with missionaries' finances.
 - **A sending team's Short-Term Teams Coordinator can:**
 - Communicate with the missionary as to the need of any short-term teams—the number of individuals needed, the types of skills needed, the timing, etc.
 - Promote the recruitment of short-termers to assist the missionary.
 - Orient and arrange training for the short-termers. This ministry is especially vital when short-termers come from different churches.
 - Work with the other sending team members to efficiently equip and send short-term teams who will enhance the missionary's long-term ministry objectives.
 - With the re-entry coordinator, guide the short-termers as they return—to not only process their own experiences but to mobilize others to pray, give, go, and/or join the sending team!
 - Train other churches' sending teams to coordinate their missionaries' short-term teams.
 - **A sending team's Seasonal Assistants can join the missionary periodically.**

Many world Christians' health, family situations, finances, job requirements, etc. mandate that they stay in their home culture. Yet they long to be ministering in a missionary role. These are not simply short-termers who contribute as they can to the work; these are people who regularly travel to assist the missionary in specific tasks. Perhaps a recurring training program needs extra hands. Or a camping ministry needs trained workers only for a few months. Or annual bookkeeping must be done. Or missionary children must have additional supervision during school holidays.

Whatever the task, these seasonal workers spend weeks or months as part of the actual missionary team—and bring back full reports regularly to the homefront sending team as well as the home church. Of course, one extra job description for the seasonal assistant is to train others to assist in a similar way, and to help train other churches to consider sending seasonal assistants to amplify their missionaries' ministries.

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WHAT DO SENDERS DO?

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- A sending team's **Researcher** can “look to the fields.”

If a fellowship or the Church at large knows nothing about a particular corner of the harvest field, there won't be much prayer to thrust forth laborers into that area and its people group. Knowing little or nothing is the starting point for one of the most crucial and yet unnoticed roles in mission work: research.

Often the missionary on the field is immersed in the language, local customs, and personalities of local contacts in a people group. But he or she may have difficulty gaining accurate information about demographics, about the actual history of a people (sometimes contrasted with the local legendary versions), about the overall culture itself, as well as current news. A home-front researcher can often glean this valuable information and provide it to the missionary, to the rest of the sending team, to sending churches and, if appropriate, to mission agencies and networks. A researcher trains new researchers for the sending team, of course—to assist and/or serve as substitutes. Researchers also train other churches' sending teams to recruit and train their own researchers.

- A sending team's **Re-Entry Coordinator(s)** can

- Discuss with missionaries before they go the expected dates and events of the missionaries' return--for visits, rests, and/or a permanent return.
- Regularly update the missionaries on the field as to developments in the homefront's popular culture—including what teenagers are wearing, what issues are in vogue, what's happening in Christian circles.
- Work with the missionary to carefully plan the personal aspects of any homecomings, and implementing and/or coordinating the work of such homecomings.
- Plan and arrange events at which returning missionaries can, in a reasonable schedule, share what God has been doing in and through them.
- Arrange for furlough housing and transportation.
- Keep updated, and inform the missionary of schooling, employment, and ministry opportunities that are possible when the missionary returns to his or her passport culture.
- Plan and arrange for the ongoing roles of returned missionaries within the fellowship.
- Arrange for any necessary counseling for returning missionaries and family members.
- Train a substitute to take on these jobs whenever necessary.
- Train other churches' sending teams to handle missionaries' re-entry challenges.

Every missionary moving into cross-cultural ministry should have such a team on the homefront. After all, how shall they proclaim unless they are sent?

- **SENDERS FOR THE BODY OF CHRIST AT-LARGE**

Some senders move into a ministry that goes beyond partnering with one missionary. They simply use their SHAPE (Did you work through this exercise in the *Find Your Niche* unit?) to support The Cause of Christ generally—by:

- Offering hospitality—meals, lodging, retreats—for missionaries
- Giving discounts on equipment or services to mission workers
- Tithing their business profits to missions (See *Business As Mission*.)
- Using their creativity to further the Kingdom of God in fresh ways

One businessman in Seattle, Washington, developed the www.MinistryHome.org web site to help hundreds of missionaries connect with new supporters. A mom organized a ministry of nannies to serve missionary families. The creative approaches to serve the mission cause are as individual as the individual sender.

Here's a great story of a newspaperman who's launching into a unique ministry serving as a sender:

“GET INVOLVED WHERE YOU ARE”

The newsletter from a local children's ministry brought a smile to my face, although it had nothing to do with what the newsletter actually said. I smiled before reading a word of it; indeed, I never read the entire letter. I smiled, in fact, because it was so difficult to read that I gave up on it.

One of my daughters, produced the letter. And in her attempt to be creative, she'd chosen a combination of colored paper and colored type that, frankly, made my eyes spin. As a writer and editor with several years of experience with newspapers, magazines and newsletters, I felt I could offer professional, as well as fatherly, advice. So we had a discussion about the challenge of staying creative without losing your readers.

Later, it dawned on me how I wished I could have a similar discussion with some of the missionaries who sent us newsletters. Many of them, I realized, were ineffective because they were poorly written or poorly designed or both. The implications: Less prayer, less financial support, less fruit for the Kingdom of God; more frustrations for God-hearted, well-intentioned missionaries.

Fast-forward a few years to 2005. I'm taking “Perspectives on the World Christian Movement.” As I began to examine and pray about my role in the Great Commission, I kept coming back to some basic beliefs. Yes, I might “go” from time to time. And, yes, our family will “send” by financially and prayerfully supporting specific missionaries. But what about this new phrase I'm hearing - *equipping?*

Perspectives gave me a deeper understanding of the role some believers play in the Great Commission —middle-of-the-road moneymakers like me who don't feel called to leave the country but still feel called to participate.

“The implications of poorly written or poorly designed newsletters: Less prayer, less financial support, less fruit for the Kingdom of God; more frustrations for God-hearted, well-intentioned missionaries.”

It took two years for me to figure out a specific and intentional plan for putting my skills as a writer and editor to use equipping others who are involved in Great Commission work. But earlier this year, in partnership with The Body Builders, we launched WordBuilders Communications Services.

The idea is to help as many missionaries and missions-related groups as I can with their communications. Right now, it's a “spare time” ministry; I still work full-time as an editor for a statewide newspaper. And clients pay nothing for the service. God has provided all the spare time I've needed for all the clients He's sent my way. And if it grows, I know He'll provide the resources, either more time for me or more writer/editor types who want to do the same thing.

In a few short months, God has proven Himself. Things I believed are now things I've seen in action: God provides for those who step into His work. ■

Note: For more information on WordBuilders, go to www.thebodybuilders.net/wordbuilder

● VOCATIONAL SENDERS

Sending specialists may serve the whole Body of Christ as, for example:

- Mission organization workers
- Researchers
- Missiologists, mission teachers
- Missionary trainers
- Missionary pastors/counselors
- Administrative personnel

The crucial significance of these roles is, frankly, tough to communicate to typical churches. That is, the typical thinking is that if you're devoted to a missions career, you ought to live in some "overseas" location and minister cross-culturally. Support in prayer and finances is often a challenge. And so, contrary to what we learned in *Perspectives*, these workers often have to call themselves "missionaries" in their church relationships. The blurring of this term—sometimes stretched into suggesting "We are *all* missionaries"—actually does a disservice to mission understanding and particularly to these unsung heroes who keep global mission efforts running smoothly.

Most organizations who hire you on as a vocational sender, however, are very good at clearly communicating to churches and supporters the importance of your role. Thinking through the [Find Your Niche](#) exercise might let you consider that, with your compelling interest in missions, God is leading you to a vocation in sending!

● WORLD CHRISTIAN SENDERS

Meanwhile, whatever sending role you explore, serious sending means living a lifestyle with world Christian characteristics such as

- Noting how culturized my Christianity may be.
- Seeking to understand how we've been blessed and how we can use that to bless other nations.
- Maintaining personal purity for the sake of His name and for the sake of demonstrating His grace to the principalities in the heavenlies (Ephesians 3:10-11).
- Going out of my way to learn about and meet people of other cultures.
- Affirming all the God-given ministries of the church as part of what He is doing in the big picture.
- Diligently mounting my part in the spiritual battles in the heavenlies as I intercede in disciplined prayer.
- Fellowshiping with believers to encourage and be encouraged.
- Sharing the great news of what God is doing.
- Constantly submitting to the supervision of God as to where I go and what I do in ministry--with no reservations.
- Serving the church.
- Becoming more and more of a student of the Word.
- Passing on a world vision to those around us we are allowed to influence.
- Developing all the qualities of a true disciple of Jesus Christ.

You don't have to minister cross-culturally to live a holy, focused, streamlined, effective life that impacts whole people groups for Jesus Christ. You can rejoice as a sender.