

WELCOMING!

You, missionary to the nations on our doorstep

*In Christ there is not East or West,
In Him no North or South;
But one great fellowship of love
Throughout the whole wide Earth.*



“**W**elcomers” are cross-cultural missionaries in their home countries who welcome international students, refugees, immigrants, tourists and diplomats in the name of Christ. If welcoming is your post-*Perspectives* volunteer role or if you’re exploring a vocation in welcoming, browse through:

- 1. [Your Pop Quiz](#)
- 2. [This Is Not Easy!](#)
- 3. [Get Missiological](#)
- 4. [Volunteer or Vocation?](#)
- 5. [Self Assessment](#)

“Each year over 120,000 new international students and scholars begin a four year sojourn in American universities and other institutions of higher learning. While these students often come to America with specific goals and plans, most of them are unaware of a personal divine plan from God. As caring committed Christians come across their paths and offer friendship in Him, they learn about the greatest friend of all Jesus Christ.”

*Tom Phillips and Bob Norsworthy
The World at your Door
Perspectives Reader*

1. YOUR POP QUIZ

How well do you know the world of welcoming ministry?

Read through the good news and bad news below, the answers might surprise you.

● The Good News: Advantages of a Welcoming Ministry

1. Your Role: You can serve cross-culturally as a missionary without the added expense, risk, travel and foreign-culture stress of missionary life in another country.

So what’s the downside of this role? Think through your own ideas of the disadvantages of this role; see how it compares with our response below under THE BAD NEWS.

2. Your Ministry: A fruitful ministry among internationals is relational. Events and information are helpful, but it’s genuinely befriending and responding to the needs of internationals that guides them to Christ.

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YOUR POP QUIZ

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Welcomers are realizing the impact of their ministries among unreached peoples. One Canadian welcomer meets refugee families from Kosovo as they arrive in Canada. He helps them find jobs and furniture for their apartments. Then he invites them to a meal and tells them, "I am your pastor, like your imam." "How can that be?" they respond. "We're Muslim and you're a Christian." "I just am," he says without explanation, and begins to lead them through the Messianic Psalms. Over the two years of this "welcoming" ministry, two extended family groups of Kosovar Albanians have come to faith in Christ!

So what's the downside of this ministry? Think through your ideas and then consider ours under THE BAD NEWS (*below*).

- 3. Your Ministry Environment:** You get to stay in your home culture.

So what's the downside? Think through your own ideas and then consider ours under THE BAD NEWS (*below*).

- 4. Your Sending Team:** You're living among your sending team—including potential financial supporters, so you can consistently keep in touch.

So what's the downside of this advantage that "overseas" missionaries don't have? Think through your own ideas and then consider ours under THE BAD NEWS (*below*).

- 5. Your New Student Believers:** Internationals—especially students—are more open to new ideas, new behavior, and are more open to the Gospel than they would be on their home turf. New believers realize the significance of their coming to Christ, and often speak of getting training and serving Christ full-time.

So what's the downside of this chance to minister unhindered to international students? Think through your own ideas and then consider ours under THE BAD NEWS (*below*).

- 6. Your New Immigrant Believers:** It's legal to openly share your faith here. Extended families and whole neighborhoods can be introduced to Jesus Christ! You can see a people movement—a church-planting movement among an unreached people right here in North America!

So what's the downside of seeing churches of immigrants or refugees form in North America? Think through your own ideas and then consider ours under THE BAD NEWS (*below*).

- 7. Your Impact:** Students return to their home countries—often in positions of leadership and influence. Immigrants have extended family ties that reach back into the relational networks of their people group in their homeland. A changed life here as you welcome these foreigners can impact the nations!

So what's the big challenge in seeing foreigners come to Christ in North America? Think through your own ideas and then consider ours under THE BAD NEWS (*below*).

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YOUR POP QUIZ

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● The *Bad News: Disadvantages of a Welcoming Ministry

*(Well, not really *bad* news. Just...challenging news. Nothing's actually "bad" about following God's commands to honor the foreigner in our midst!)

- 1. Your Role:** You are serving cross-culturally as a missionary, but most church people don't think you're a "real" missionary because you're not on a "foreign field" or "overseas."
- 2. Your Ministry:** Because it's a relational ministry of befriending internationals, it's a time-intensive work. (Putting on an event—a North American ministry standard—is time-specific. Sitting and talking, eating together, talking on the phone, enjoying recreation and talking, intentionally building a friendship is open-ended and takes time—a rare commodity in our culture.) Other cultures' views of friendship, and of possessions and wealth further complicate ministry to internationals as they expect deep attachments, and can depend too much on your efforts to respond to their needs.
- 3. Your Ministry Environment:** You constantly have to apologize for much of your home culture and resist its bad influences on your international friends.
- 4. Your Sending Team:** You've living among potential financial supporters, so they sense no urgency in committing to your support team since you don't have some impending date to "go"!
- 5. Your New Student Believers:** Seeing students come to Christ apart from their *oikos*—extended families—and away from their home culture proves difficult and sometimes dangerous for the individual, her/his family and any church movement among their people when the student returns home. Thus many new student believers immediately begin trying to stay in North America permanently rather than risk being salt and light in their own culture.
- 6. Your New Immigrant Believers:** Immigrants and refugees are sometimes uneducated, limited in English and typically are low-income earners. And so the strategy of a church-planting movement among this group is almost as much a challenge as a movement in their homeland would be. These challenges require that a welcoming ministry is fully prepared to go way beyond befriending and helping out these foreigners as it moves into the missiological realm of fostering a church-planting movement.
- 7. Your Impact:** The new Christian international student returning home usually faces a loss of the spiritual support he or she has enjoyed in a campus ministry—plus the resistance of family, culture and Satan himself. Among an immigrant people in North America, nearly every family will resist going back to their homeland with the Gospel. They made it to North America, and nearly two more generations will need to grow up before some will return to their people as missionaries with Good News. Again, an effective welcoming ministry needs a solid missiological core in order to overcome these what-happens-after-salvation challenges.

2. THIS IS NOT EASY

Sometimes those in welcoming ministries, as they mobilize churches to participate in reaching the internationals in our midst, tend to minimize the effort required. It's true that any believer can invite a foreigner over for a Thanksgiving or Christmas meal. Anyone can help set up an international dinner to welcome new foreign students. But as noted in our BAD NEWS—no, the CHALLENGING NEWS about a solid welcoming ministry, this is not easy.

It's complicated by:

- The number of cultures involved
- The clashes among cultures and between other cultures and the North American culture
- The difficulty of long term follow-through
- North Americans' avoidance of highly relational and therefore time- and energy-intensive ministry.

Why is something so obvious and seemingly simple—welcoming the foreigner—actually such a challenging ministry? Because it's important! In fact, it's crucial in the grand, unchangeable purpose of God.

The alien living with you must be treated as one of your native-born. Love him as yourself.... God loves the alien, giving him food and clothing. And you are to love those who are aliens.

—Leviticus 19:34

—Deuteronomy 10:18-20

● Caring for the Alien

God's rag-tag Christian army is made up of ordinary, everyday people. We live all over the world and have been given two great commands. We are to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to love our neighbors as ourselves.

But who is our neighbor?

When a lawyer asked that question in Luke 10:25-37, Jesus told a story about the man who was mugged by robbers along the road. As a priest passed by, he did nothing to help the man. A Levite likewise did nothing. It was only a Samaritan (half Jew/half Gentile) who showed kindness to the man and ministered to him.

In Jesus' days on earth, the Samaritans were despised half-breeds in the minds of the average Jew. The animosity was so great that Jews avoided Samaritans at all cost when traveling between Galilee and Judea. Tensions ran high (Luke 9:52-54; 10:25-37; 17:11-19; John 8:48). But Jesus broke through those hostilities with a double-barreled response to the lawyer's question.

After telling His story, Jesus asked, "Which of these three proved to be a neighbor...?"

A knee-jerk reaction to this familiar tale is: "Love my neighbor? Well, my neighbor is even a stranger beaten on the roadside. I should love anyone and care for him or her." But Jesus asked *which of the three*—the priest, the Levite or the Samaritan—"proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the robbers' hands?" (Luke 10:36). Then He nodded at the lawyer's correct answer: "The one who showed mercy" (10:37). *The neighbor was the Samaritan!*

As usual with Jesus, He was layering His simple stories with disturbing meaning: Yes, the Samaritan was a neighbor to the beaten man, who then was a neighbor of the Samaritan. And the Samaritan demonstrated a love for that beaten neighbor. But the wilder meaning for His Jewish audience was this: *Which of the three* is the neighbor? The Samaritan is your neighbor! You are to cross-culturally love the half-breed as you love yourself!

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THIS IS NOT EASY

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Our neighbors are people from other cultures, many of whom we don't naturally like, those who are different, who don't dress like we do, who don't speak the same language. We're to love these as we love ourselves. Jesus wasn't simply suggesting a kind stance; He was summarizing in this "Love your neighbor" a series of Old Testament laws about our treatment of the foreigner—the neighbor—in our midst.

● The Heart of God

God defends foreigners and tells us to do likewise:

- The alien living with you must be treated as one of your native-born. Love him as yourself, for you were aliens in Egypt. I am the Lord your God. —Leviticus 19:34
- He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the alien, giving him food and clothing. And you are to love those who are aliens, for you yourselves were aliens in Egypt. Fear the Lord your God and serve Him. Hold fast to Him and take your oaths in His name. —Deuteronomy 10:18-20
- Cursed is the man who withholds justice from the alien, the fatherless or the widow. Then all the people shall say, "Amen!" (Deuteronomy 27:19).

Not only are we to love them and give them food and clothing, but God ordered His Old Testament people to tithe to them:

- When you have finished setting aside a tenth of all your product in the third year, the year of the tithe, you shall give it to the Levite, the alien, the fatherless and the widow, so that they may eat in your towns and be satisfied. —Deuteronomy 26:12

In fact, there are more than 40 references in the Old Testament alone to looking out for the foreigners among us. Why is God so concerned about them? Because He loves them just as much as He loves us. God's radical love extends to all peoples on the face of the earth equally.

In His love, He often shifts peoples around the globe to locations where they are primed to meet Him. He moves thousands of Kurds to Berlin to form the first Kurdish churches. He moves Bawean Island workers from Indonesia to Singapore to meet Christians for the first time. He allows the government of the People's Republic of China to forcibly relocate Tibetan Buddhists to cities where Han Chinese Christians introduce them to Jesus Christ. He moves Mongolian students to Moscow to meet Tanzanian believers who welcome them into the Kingdom.

From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. —Acts 17:26-27

Through the evil propagated by Satan, his emissaries, and even human beings, and through curiosity, illness, famine, business opportunities, tourism, family relationships and hundreds of other means, God moves people who need Him to your doorstep.

Unfortunately, much of the Church hasn't learned that lesson. Around 80% of all international students who study in North America never make it into a North American home. ■

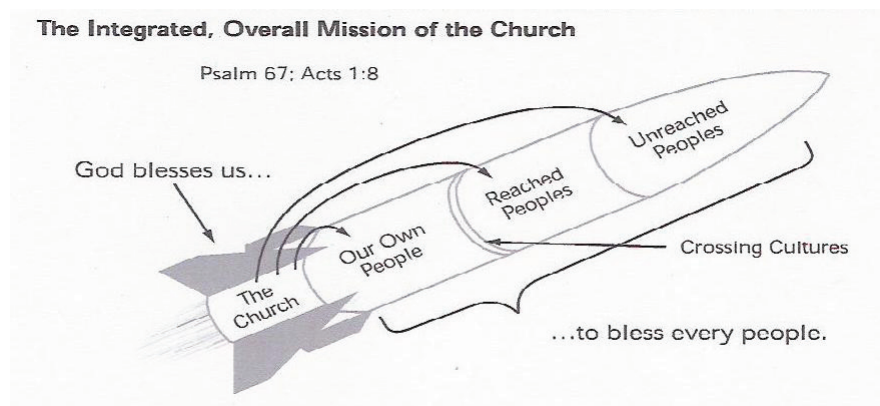
3. GET MISSIOLOGICAL!

Remember “The Power of an Integrated Vision” essay in our *Perspectives Reader*? It presented a “rocket” illustration of the four dynamics of what God is doing in blessing His people to bless every people.

Nothing profoundly missiological here, but isn’t it obvious that “Reached Peoples” and “Unreached Peoples” occupy very different positions in the overall mission of the Church? So they require different approaches as to how we can bless them with the blessing of God.

Sometimes welcoming ministries treat every foreigner as simply another foreigner from a geopolitical country—without taking into account whether the person is from a reached or an unreached people group. If a welcoming ministry is only about befriending, evangelizing and personal discipling, then it’s missing the *Perspectives* kind of long-term missiological strategies of people-group thinking.

Your challenge as a welcomer: Get good at missiology. (See [Resources](#) below.)



4. VOLUNTEER OR VOCATION?

Will welcoming be a volunteer role for now? Envision yourself...

- Meeting a Malaysian at the airport and taking her to her apartment.
- Teaching a Tajik the difference between a penny, a nickel, a dime, and a quarter.
- Helping an Azeri from Iran set up a bank account.
- Driving a Cambodian Khmer woman to the store and showing her how to grocery shop.
- Listening to a Jordanian Arab share about his poor grade in a basic engineering course.
- Hurting with a Mapeche girl from Chile as she tells you about her mother back home who has cancer.
- Having a Hausa couple from Nigeria over for tea and playing a board game with them.
- Sitting at a table and hearing all about the brothers and sisters of a Kazakh student.
- Taking an Aceh from Indonesia to see the tourist sights of your area.
- Having three Zhuang Chinese students over for Thanksgiving dinner.
- Listening to a Japanese student share about roommate problems.

Is welcoming a potential area of vocational ministry for you? If so, you need to line yourself up for almost all the knowledge-skills-character prep any missionary serving outside her/his own culture must consider.

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VOLUNTEER OR VOCATION?

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And a good place to start in preparing for vocational cross-cultural ministry is a good old intimidating Self-Assessment Profile.

If you haven't already, be sure to review the *Run With the Vision: Find Your Niche* unit. Take the time to actually study through the Scriptures and discussion under "Different Settings" and "Knowing God's Will."

The primary areas of competence in serving cross-culturally include **character, skills and knowledge**. Character demands *spiritual formation*. Skills call for *instruction* and *practice*. And knowledge means we've got a lifetime of *learning* ahead of us.

The following self-assessment hinges on these three emphases of competence as a missionary.

The assessment is not scientifically constructed; it's only for your own use. Take your time praying through these factors to assess your readiness to serve cross-culturally as a learner, trader, storyteller to foreigners in your own culture.

You can simply print off a copy of this profile and work through this assessment on your own. Or you can accentuate its effectiveness by printing extra copies for:

1. A very close friend—anyone who knows you well.

This person is to fill out as much as she/he can on the assessment form and then hand it back to you. You compare what this friend perceives about you—as contrasted or confirming what you perceive about yourself. (We're all very good at fooling ourselves.) By comparing the two versions, you'll have a more accurate appraisal of your character, skills and knowledge.

2. A mentor.

If you want to develop a serious personal preparation plan, you'll follow the suggestions under *Plot Your Preparation*, where it's explained that a mentor can simply be a friend who helps keep you accountable to your preparation plan.

If you plan on following a personal preparation plan, take the assessment now—and then about six months from now to trace your development in each area. For now, relax your personal defenses, pray for clarity and assess your readiness for a cross-cultural career.

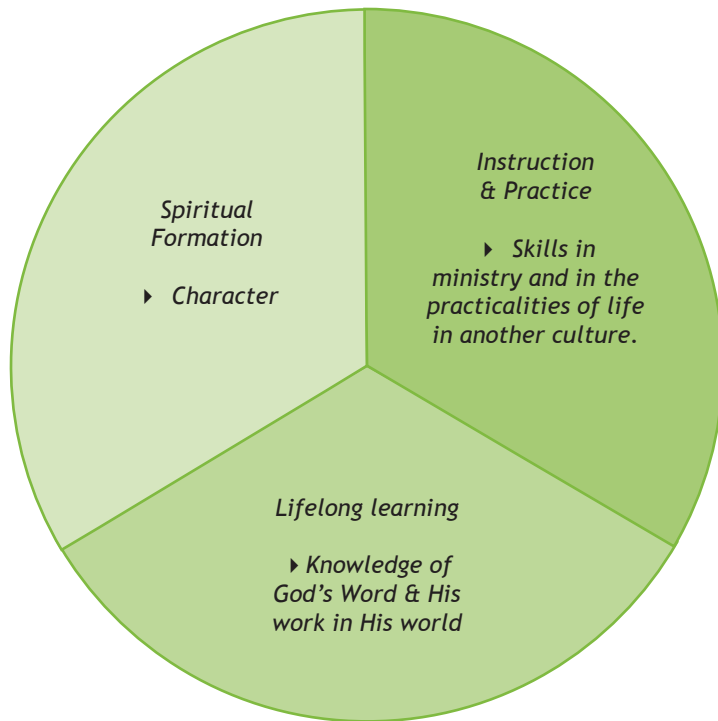
For more Welcoming resources, check out the Next Steps section of the Perspectives website. www.perspectives.org

"If you have unshakeable confidence that you are qualified to serve cross-culturally, you might not be dependent enough on God to be used. If you're fearful and feel inadequate, God may be declaring, 'You're ready!' (See Exodus 3:7-10 where God refers to Himself 9 times and to insecure Moses just once. This is 90% about God and maybe just 10% about you! Relax.)"

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SELF-ASSESSMENT PROFILE FOR PROSPECTIVE CROSS-CULTURAL WORKERS

The key ingredients in your ongoing immersion in God's Word, His work and His world.



The purpose of the assessment is to help you identify your strengths and areas in which you may need improvement.

This in no way suggests you need to be perfect in every area in order to move into missionary service as a welcomer. Self-evaluation can be unsettling; we're always our own worst critic. But don't give in to the enemy's ploys of discouragement and depression about not right now measuring up to an imaginary missionary ideal.

[Click here for the Self-Assessment Profile.](#)

PLOT YOUR PREPARATION *PREP 101*

- Develop a solid sending base:
 - Serve and build relationships with leaders in your home church.
 - Begin now developing a list of people who trust you, are interested in your ministry aspirations and will pray for you. Explore ways to minister to them now—providing big-picture news, listening, praying specifically for them, etc. (See the unit on [Serve As a Sender](#) to begin developing your core team.)
- Sharpen skills in resolving interpersonal conflicts. (North American Christians are famous for avoiding the people we don't get along with and for simply switching churches when the relational going gets tough.) Ministry is dealing with people. Working with a team is dealing with people. There will be interpersonal conflicts!
- Get good at cross-cultural friendships. Hone your cross-cultural skills now—skills that comprise sitting down and eating and talking with international students and immigrants.
- Adjust to the world Christian “wartime lifestyle” we studied in *Perspectives*. Live as frugally as possible with few frills—while generously budgeting funds for Kingdom priorities. Avoid or get out of debt.

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PLOT YOUR PREPARATION

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- Go on short-term vision or ministry trips to the cultures most common to the internationals you'll work with. (Among international students, for example, detailed data is available from universities as to which countries their students come from—although, unfortunately, not which people group.)
- Get informal training. (See *Resources*.) Consider formal training. Your local Christian college will offer cross-cultural courses. But unless you commit to a welcoming ministry that requires a degree in Bible or missions, don't presume you need to pursue a full degree. Every reputable organization will have its own suggestions for pre-candidate training and, after your appointment, will provide training and orientation.
- Take time to study all the mission agencies working among ethnics in North America or, if your interest is campus ministry, all the international student ministries. Just because one is familiar to you or it's one of three you know about doesn't mean that's who you're destined to work with.

It's one thing to take action—study and call an organization, sign up for a short-term, send out an email to friends about your aspirations. It's another thing to, well, grow.

Again, cross-cultural preparation is knowledge, skills and character. And the greatest of these is character. Anybody can learn skills and acquire knowledge. Not everybody does a good job of impersonating Jesus.

Q. How do you “work on your character”?

A. Make yourself accountable to a mentor.

CROSS-CULTURAL WORKER MENTORING

Welcoming preparation is about God's Word, His work in His real world. Readiness is a process of growing in *knowledge* about each of these areas, a process of practicing *skills* in each of these three areas. And it's about *character*: No international wants the Good News of God's Kingdom to be communicated by a jerk.

● The Real Deal

This Cross-Cultural Worker Mentoring Program guides you into your own customized **Welcomer Prep Plan** that emphasizes knowledge, skills and character.

So this isn't just an elementary step in cross-cultural readiness. It's the real deal: the beginning (or acceleration) of the process of fine-tuning your role in the Great Commission—a lifelong exploration. Which always brings up questions like:

- Is there a “call to missions” involved in welcoming?
- How do you know where to serve?
- Where do you get training?
- What organization do you go with?
- If you commit to welcoming, do you have to make it a lifelong commitment?
- What's the deal with raising support?
- What about resistance from family?
- How do I know I'm qualified?
- What about debt? Etc.

Big questions with lots of answers. So don't presume too much, don't play to your own or other people's conventional expectations. Don't pretend to know all the answers in the process of getting from here to there. Just take it one step at a time.

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CROSS-CULTURAL WORKER MENTORING

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COMMENTS FROM CROSS-CULTURAL WORKERS ABOUT MISSION MENTORING

In a recent survey of missionaries, DualReach (DualReach.org) found that every respondent who had received mentoring or counseling during missionary preparation listed it as “highly beneficial.”

Missionaries made these specific comments:

- *Make sure individuals have someone discipling them to have a deeper walk with God—a walk which doesn’t rely on outside spiritual nurturing.*
- *Pastoral encouragement was very significant in affirming my giftedness for ministry.*
- *Encourage local churches to show an interest in future missionaries by holding them accountable. Sending a person through a preparation process shows the church’s interest.*
- *I would like to have had several ministry options and counsel on how my gifts matched up with those options.*
- *Help prospective missionaries be involved in a small group of people who care about each other’s spiritual well-being and the direction each one is going in life. Ideally they will continue to care even when someone departs to train or to serve the Lord somewhere else.*
- *I wish the pastor and missions committee had taken an interest in me. I would have liked the pastor to have taken more of a role in meeting with me and for the missions committee to have provided direction and been more proactive.*
- *It is extremely beneficial to feel like you are supported and encouraged by your church at home. Nurture relationships between missionary and missions leaders in the church prior to departure.*

● The Program

The process is:

- Complete the **Self-Assessment Profile**.
- Ask a close friend or relative (not a spouse) to evaluate you in a “second-opinion” Profile.
- Meet once with a person from your church’s mission team/committee or church staff.
- Find someone who’ll serve this year as your mentor-encourager. (Relax. It’s easier than you think.)
- Meet a second time with the mission team or staff person and your mentor.
- Embark on your personalized **Welcomer Prep Plan**.

If you opt-in for this process, you’ll use:

- A **Growth Guide for aspiring Cross-Cultural Workers** to follow up the Self-Assessment Profile. The Guide gives you directions for growth in each area where you want to develop—whether in knowledge, skills or character.
- A **Welcomer Prep Plan**—one of the authors of which is you—to plot an individualized action plan that will guide you through systematic steps to develop the character, skills and knowledge to succeed in any area of mission work including welcoming.
- Accountability to meet every other month (or more often) with your mentor, who prays for you and keeps you accountable to actually work on the growth steps you’ve chosen.
- Accountability to meet twice a year with the team, committee or person responsible for missions in your church.
- A free trip to Paris, Rio de Janeiro or the South Pacific island of your choice.

(Just kidding on that last one. We wanted to make sure you were tracking.)

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CROSS-CULTURAL WORKER MENTORING

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● Immediate Steps to a Mentoring Experience

1. Ask God to guide you as you complete the Self-Assessment Profile. This self-check is not “turned in” to anybody official to be filed in any way; you keep a copy and your mentor keeps a copy. It is seen only by you, your mentor and the church mission or staff person you consult with.

- Make an extra copy of the Profile.
- As objectively and honestly as possible, grade yourself in each area.
- In the last section, indicate three areas where you want to focus your initial efforts for growth. You can work on more areas later, but it is important to concentrate on a few at a time in order not to be overwhelmed.
- Ask someone who knows you well—a friend or relative—to evaluate your character and skills by completing a second copy of the Assessment without having seen your version of it. If married, ask someone other than your spouse to complete this second-opinion assessment.
- Compare your answers. If you don’t understand his/her assessment of certain areas, talk it over. This in itself could be a huge growth-step for you. (How often do we give good friends/relatives permission to critique us?) Ask God to help you not to be defensive or discouraged!

2. Establish a time to meet with someone from your church staff/mission team to discuss how she/he can help you grow. *If married, you should meet as a couple with this person after both of you have completed the Assessment.*

- Give this person a copy of both your own and the second-opinion assessments to review *prior to your appointment.*
- Talk with this person about several people who might be a mentor for you. (Each person in a married couple will connect with her/his own mentor.) A mentor doesn’t need to have vocational ministry or mission experience, doesn’t need to be older than you, doesn’t need to generate the content of your preparation process. She or he simply needs to care about you and agree to keep you accountable as you work through a plan to explore the possibility of a missions career.
- Set a tentative appointment when this church staff/mission team person will meet with you and your mentor to talk over objectives, roles and expectations. If married, you, your mentor and the mission team person will meet separately from your spouse.
- Ask the church staff/mission team person to check with you and your mentor at least every six months to evaluate your progress.

3. Pray for a mentor. Ask believers of your own gender if they would consider a one-year commitment to:

- Meet with you at least once every two months.
- To Regularly by email or phone ask you how you’re doing in your welcomer ministry exploration plan.
- To Pray for you.

Your mentor must be a believer you know to be spiritually healthy, must be of your own gender, must be local enough to meet with you in-person at least every other month. This person does not have to be a member of your own church, does not have to have any vocational ministry or missions experience and does not have to be older than you.

4. Give your mentor a copy of *Directions for Cross-Cultural Workers’ Mentor-Encouragers.*

