



FOLLOW

HIS LEAD

A GUIDE FOR THE JOURNEY

Your next steps when considering cross-cultural ministry

*“How beautiful are the feet of those who
preach the good news!”*

- Romans 10:15

Dear friend,

God rejoices over those who go, not because He needs us, but because He gets the most glory by working powerfully through people like us.

That’s why at ABWE Canada we celebrate the fact that you are prayerfully considering your role in God’s mission. And since you’re probably full of questions, this booklet was designed to guide you in your next steps on the journey.

Mobilization Services is here for you. Call or email us any time. We would love to hear how God is working in you.

In Christ,

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Step 1

Understanding Missions

“Mission exists because worship doesn’t.”

- John Piper

God is a missionary God. He is passionately committed to spreading His glory to all nations. So how should we define “missions?”

We must start with what missions is *not*. God commands His people to serve the poor, care for the sick, and advocate for justice, but none of these endeavours are the root of missions. If missions is reduced to providing relief, education, or compassion - in other words, if everything is missions - then *nothing* is.

Similarly, missions is more than sharing the gospel. If missions simply meant evangelism, then we could all do that in our hometown without crossing cultures.

WHAT IS MISSIONS?

To define missions, we must begin with the *gospel*, then work out to consider what God is doing in *history*.

The *gospel* is the good news of Jesus Christ’s death, resurrection, and reign to save sinners. This was necessary because, although all human cultures have knowledge of God through creation (Romans 1:19-20), every people group has rejected God (1:21-23) and is born in sin, trapped under God’s wrath (Ephesians 2:1-3). Since God’s standards of good and evil are written on every heart, all are accountable for our sin even if we’ve never heard of Jesus or read the Bible (Romans 2:14-15). Humans in all cultures are equally lost in sin and in need of rescue from an eternity in Hell.

The good news is that “God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16). Christ - the ultimate missionary - left the comforts of heaven, crossed into our world, died in our place, and rose in victory. Now all who repent and trust in Christ are made right with God and given eternal life.

What is God doing in history? At the onset of God’s redemptive plan, He promised that through Abraham “all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Genesis 17:3). Jesus, the promised offspring of Abraham’s line, purchased “people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation” on the cross (Revelation 5:9). Right now, God is making a people for Himself, bought by Jesus, from among the nations. We call that people the *church*.

Christ told His followers, “As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you” (John 20:21). We are commanded to disciple all the nations (Matthew 28: 18-20) until the earth is “full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea” (Isaiah 11:9). God’s work in history will be finished when all His people from every tribe and language are worshiping Christ in heaven (Revelation 5:9).

The gospel is the message God is using in history to save and set apart a people for Himself in the church from every nationality, language and ethnicity. Missions, then, is what carries this gospel to all the nations. It’s the job of the church that’s between Christ’s first coming and His return.

So what is missions? **Missions is the task of proclaiming the gospel to every people group that has not yet heard it, in order to establish churches** - churches that will carry on missions by reaching their culture, teaching others, and sending out missionaries.

WHAT IS A MISSIONARY?

With missions defined, next we ask, “*What is a missionary?*” And Scripture has a surprising answer.

Some have said that the word “missionary” is not in the Bible, but that isn’t quite true. We derive words like missionary and missions from the Latin word *missio*, which simply means *sending*. The Greek equivalent is *apostello*, from which the word apostle comes. While there were only twelve Apostles, “sent ones” commissioned by Jesus to lay the foundation of the church, in a broader sense, anyone who is “sent” carrying the gospel message is a similar type of missionary ambassador.

We would think, then, that a missionary is simply sent to win as many converts as possible. But that wasn’t the Apostle Paul’s job description. After spending only a short time traversing the Roman Empire and planting churches in a handful of key towns, Paul says, “From Jerusalem and all the way around to Illyricum I have fulfilled the ministry of the gospel of Christ” (Romans 15:19). How had he “fulfilled” the ministry of the gospel as in, mission accomplished when millions of lost people remained throughout the Roman world?

It isn’t the missionary’s aim, necessarily, to see every single individual won to faith. Rather, a missionary is one who serves in a culture long enough to see a healthy church form, full of converts *capable of evangelizing the rest of their people*. Paul established churches as beachheads to ensure that the gospel would spread. When a healthy church with qualified leaders was in planted and ready to own the mission for themselves, Paul’s work was done.

In recent years, a grotesquely disproportionate number of missionaries have been sent to minister in places that have already been “reached” where there are already enough believers present to evangelize the rest.

According to the Joshua Project, more than 90% of missionaries serve “reached” people groups.

Meanwhile, the “unreached,” those who have little or no access to the gospel, with no churches or believers in their context to share with them, comprise about 7 000 people groups. That totals about nearly 4 billion people who have never heard of Christ. Most of these people groups live in North Africa, the Middle East, Asia, India, and the Pacific Islands, a region of the world known as the 10/40 Window (based on lines of latitude and longitude).

Unlike most in the West who could easily hear the gospel through a Christian friend or nearby church, unreached people generally have no churches to visit, friends to call, or sermons to stumble upon on the radio. Though some heard of a “Jesus,” they have never understood the gospel itself. They are lost.

God may be drawing you to become a Pauline-type, pioneering missionary, “fulfilling the ministry of the gospel” among people who will otherwise perish without hearing about Jesus. Or perhaps he is leading you to be a Timothy-type missionary who comes in after the pioneer to strengthen and build young communities of faith (1 Timothy 1:3, 2 Timothy 2:1-2). Either way, we pray you recognize that a missionary isn’t just an adventurous, free spirit stirred by a noble social cause.

A missionary preaches the gospel with the aim of starting churches that can reach people groups among whom Jesus isn’t yet known and worshiped.

From this definition, it’s clear that not everyone can be a missionary. But everyone *can* have a part in the bigger task by going, sending, supporting, or mobilizing others. What is your role?

Do you long to devote your life to this task? Do you have the desire to cross cultural boundaries, or help send those who do? If so,

God's Spirit may be directing you. We implore you to pray, study God's Word, and obey God wherever He leads. Eternity hangs in the balance for billions.

Recommended Reading

- *Let the Nations Be Glad*
John Piper
- *Theology and Practice of Mission*
Bruce Riley Ashford
- *When Everything Is Missions*
Denny Spitters & Matthew Ellison
- *Missions: How the Local Church Goes Global*
Andy Johnson
- *Radical*
David Platt

Step 2

Understanding Your Call

“To know the will of God, we need an open Bible and an open map.”

- William Carey

Are you being “called” to be a missionary? Discovering God’s will for your individual life can seem daunting. *What if I miss God’s best? What if it’s outside my comfort zone? What if I can’t hear God speak?* These questions can create anxiety - or avoidance.

God doesn’t want us to be frozen by fear. While God can certainly give us inner “nudges,” His will doesn’t need to be found - it was never lost! We have His Word:

*Your word is a lamp to my feet and light to my path.
(Psalm 119:105)*

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us to His own glory and excellence, by which He has granted to us His precious and very great promises... (2 Peter 1:3-4a)

The Bible reveals God’s will: for us to disciple the nations. That’s the big picture. To be sure, Scripture doesn’t tell us everything. God’s plan for the details of our individual lives is often secret (Deuteronomy 29:29). But if we simply obey what we know, He will guide us:

The steps of a man are established by the Lord, when He delights in his way. (Psalm 37:23)

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make straight your paths. (Proverbs 3:5-6)

We cannot decipher God's sovereign will for every detail of our future. It is futile to try. God, after all, "frustrates the plans of the peoples" (Psalm 33:10). But God *has* revealed His *moral will*, His commands. And within those parameters, we actually have freedom to choose what we enjoy.

Augustine wrote, "Love God and do as you please." In other words, if we truly love God, we will aim to please Him. John MacArthur says this means that living by God's Scriptural will means being "saved, Spirit-filled, sanctified, submissive, and suffering" (Found: God's Will, 54). That's it.

Does that free us to live for our own pleasures? Hardly. "To whom much was given, of him much will be required" (Luke 12:48). We are accountable to live intentionally, wisely, and submissively for God's glory, not selfish benefit. And if we trust that God's will is sufficiently revealed in Scripture, we will begin to see His missionary heart bleeding through every page, and we will sense that we are all called in some way, whether as goers or senders, to engage that mission.

So, as William Carey, missionary to India, stated, "To know the will of God we need an open Bible and an open map." The question of calling isn't one of waiting to see a flashing neon sign over a world map or feel a "liver-quiver" when someone mentions the right country; it's about assessing your abilities, circumstances, and desires in light of the global need.

But you cannot assess these things alone.

Recommended Reading

- *Found: God's Will*
John MacArthur
- *Decision Making and the Will of God*
Garry Friesen
- *Just Do Something*
A Liberating Approach to Finding God's Will
Kevin DeYoung

Step 3

Connecting With Your Church

“Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.”

- Acts 13:3

Making decisions in isolation is unhealthy. God’s mission is too big to be accomplished alone. He designed the local church community as the sending base for His mission.

Note Acts 13:1-3:

Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a lifelong friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.

The Holy Spirit sent the first missionaries when the local church gathered. Just as biblical missions begets churches, the church is ordained to beget missionaries.

So how can we be sure the church is sending us, and we aren’t flying solo in our decision-making?

TALK TO YOUR PASTOR

“In the abundance of counselors there is safety” (Proverbs 11:14). We must seek counsel from trusted influences including spouses, family, mentors, and friends. But most of all, since we see in Acts 13 that the

local church is to commission those who go, any decision about missions should begin with a conversation with your local pastors and elders. Here are some ways to start the conversation:

1. Explain your current burden and circumstances.

If you don't have a deep relationship with your pastors and elders, start one.

2. Ask him to join you in prayer.

In Acts 13, the Holy Spirit worked through the prayer of church leaders.

3. Invite honest feedback on your life and ministry.

If your marriage is a wreck, your kids are in rebellion, or your ministry is seriously deficient, you may need a spiritual leader watching your life to say you're not ready. There's no shame in staying put where you are.

4. Ask to hear the church's philosophy of missions.

Your church may have a strategic focus on one part of the world or type of ministry. Hold your desires open-handedly and seek to submit to the godly direction set by your leaders. Don't just talk; listen.

5. Ask for input on agencies.

Your pastors may have certain agencies they prefer or a pipeline for those contemplating cross-cultural ministry. Make sure you follow their process.

6. Schedule multiple follow-up conversations.

Your first conversation may plant a seed in your pastor's mind about sending. Continue the conversation over time and see how God directs.

7. Find opportunities to share your heart with your church's staff, elders, or missions committee.

Don't limit your conversations to your go-to friend at the church; have the right conversations with the right people or groups.

Seek the voices most relevant and authoritative, not just those whom you know will rubber-stamp your ideas.

8. Be open to redirection.

Your pastor may ask you to wait or consider other ministries in the church. Whether you agree with your pastor's response or not, Scripture commands us both to use discernment and submit to our church's leaders (Hebrews 13:17). Believe that God is directing you through your spiritual authorities.

Perhaps you're now thinking, "Well, this all assumes I'm a member of a church and know my pastors." Exactly!

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

The New Testament depicts the church as a distinct community, one that adds members (Acts 2:47), removes members (1 Corinthians 5:4-5), or gathers together to confront (Matthew 18:17). And when Paul calls the church a "body" in Ephesians 4, he implies that there is real commitment and accountability. From this we deduce that membership isn't just a modern notion or a mere formality; it's a covenantal obligation.

If you have not yet officially joined your church, explore your church's membership process. Commit to God's people before you ask them to commit to you.

SERVE

Are you involved in your church? Remember that missions is about both exporting the gospel *and* exporting local churches worldwide. Your history of serving the local church reflects on your ability to carry forward the church as God's vehicle for mission. If you've served faithfully, God is already using you - rejoice! But if you don't have a history of faithfully serving the local church, it's doubtful that trajectory will change once you deploy overseas.

BLOOM WHERE PLANTED

Perhaps you've heard the "747 principle" - that no one becomes a missionary in midair before they step off a plane and onto the field.

Do you share your faith with friends, neighbors, family, strangers, and people of other cultures? Before being sent in Acts 13, Paul and Barnabas were already involved in evangelism and discipleship activity through the church in Antioch (Acts 11:19-30). Reflect honestly and use your present ministry activity to assess your future missionary fitness. Consider how God has already used you. Consider your wiring, spiritual gifts, and past experiences.

Finally, perhaps you don't have the kind of relationship with your church that you've been reading about. If so, don't lose heart. God uses imperfect people and imperfect churches. If your church does not send missionaries, pray that your situation will spark a burden for missions and seek to offer solutions rather than giving critiques. If perhaps you feel that your church does not have the marks of a biblical church, do not consider leaving until you've spoken with your pastors, prayed, evaluated the legitimacy of your concerns, and found a better, alternative church.

Honour the church as the bride Christ bled and died for (Ephesians 5:25) and trust God, and He will honour your efforts in return.

Recommended Reading

- *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*
Mark Dever
- *Gaining by Losing*
J.D. Greear

Step 4

Engaging ABWE Canada

You're ready to take a step towards becoming a missionary, but you have plenty of unanswered questions, so we want you to get to know us.

OUR VISION

“Glorify God by assisting churches to achieve their local and international mission objectives.”

Our dream is to see every field where we work go all the way from “unreached” to leading their own church-planting missions movements from churches led by nationals. We labour for the day when people of all tribes and tongues will know Christ (Revelation 7:9-10).

OUR IDENTITY

ABWE Global Inc. operating as ABWE Canada (Across Borders for World Evangelism) is an independent, unaffiliated missions agency. Together with our US counterpart there are about 1000 missionaries serving in about 75 countries. About 500 churches send missionaries through ABWE and about 5 000 churches support ABWE missionaries.

We value evangelism and gospel-centred discipleship, the local church, life-long learning, excellence, teamwork, compassion, and equipping nationals.

Most of all, we are committed to the purity of the gospel and upholding sound doctrine. Our missionaries and sending churches all embrace our statement of faith. See <https://www.abwe.ca/explore-our-resources/about-abwe/our-doctrine>.

PATHWAYS

ABWE missionaries serve across the world in Africa, Asia, the Pacific, Europe, the Middle East, North Africa, and the Americas, aiming to make disciples, plant churches, and train leaders to carry on missions movements. We prioritize relational evangelism through chronological Bible study, utilizing any and every platform to put workers in contact with the lost. ABWE missionaries also raise financial support from churches and individual donors with coaching from ABWE. But missionary service is *not* one-size-fits-all.

ABWE's Pathways allow you to choose the route that's right for you based on duration of service, season of life, financial need, professional skill, or educational level. ABWE serves its missionaries by providing biblical and missiological training, administrative oversight, member care, financial planning, benefit coordination, team building, professional development, and strategic leadership.

Long-Term (more than 4 years). ABWE serves long-term missionaries with administrative oversight, training, member care, financial planning, benefits, team building, professional development and strategic leadership.

Mid-Term (1 to 4 years). A mid-term missionary is typically someone who has experienced short-term and wants to have a bigger impact. This type of person is seriously considering long-term service but wants to get to know a culture first. He or she is a full member of the field team and receives training that is both in-depth and timely.

Short-Term (6 weeks to 1 year). Serving short-term, either as a team or alone, can be a critical component in discerning God's long-term leading. Most ABWE field teams are able to accommodate short-term workers. Our training process is abbreviated and focuses on your mentorship experience on the field with more experienced workers. Short-term is distinct from vision trips (1-2 weeks to visit a field and see if you're a fit), short team trips, or brief volunteer opportunities on the field, which are coordinated separately through missionaries on the ground.

Students. Students can serve as individuals, join team trips, experience immersive cross-cultural internships on the field, and receive practical advice on missions through seminars and mentoring. For teams, we can help organize funds, travel, training, and other logistics for taking a team to work beside our workers on the field. We love coming alongside pastors and college faculty to encourage young adults toward missionary work.

Associate. An associate missionary with ABWE is a mid- or long-term field team member actively involved with ministry, yet who has the opportunity to get to the field through alternative routes - working a secular job as a “tentmaker,” relying on another funding source, or utilizing retirement income, etc. This flexible option opens the door for non-conventional cross-cultural workers to connect themselves to ABWE’s established, full-time church planting teams to maximize their impact.

CONNECT WITH US

You may have questions this booklet can’t answer. We’re here to pray with you and help you find the right fit. Your journey with ABWE Canada is never impersonal.

Call 877-690-1009 or email mobilization@abwe.ca, or follow us on Facebook for up-to-date, inspiring missions content.

Our 24-Hour Demo event, held at the ABWE International Headquarters (IHQ) in Harrisburg, PA, offers the chance to spend a full day of exploring your next steps of ways to go.

Call 877-690-1009, email mobilization@abwe.ca, or visit <https://www.abwe.org/resources/events/24-hour-demo> for more information.

You can also browse current ministry opportunities by field, duration, or skills on our US counterpart’s website at <https://www.abwe.ca/serve-with-us/why-go>.

Step 5

Becoming A Missionary

Your church stands behind you. You've engaged ABWE and now embrace our vision and statement of faith. Now you want to enlist. If you are still unsure of how God is leading you, consider short-term or mid-term. An apprenticeship-type experience can help you make an informed decision before you commit for a career, or it could simply be a valuable season invested in cross-cultural ministry before God leads you to serve elsewhere.

Whichever pathway you choose, your process will follow a similar trajectory.

HOW TO APPLY

Phase 1: Application

Register at <http://go.abwe.org/register> and begin an application. You can switch pathways at any time as needed.

Once you've registered an account and verified your email, you'll be taken to a personalized checklist outlining all the info we need covering your personal testimony, citizenship, prior experience, sending church information, education, employment, and local church involvement.

Once we've reviewed your initial information, we'll connect with you and your pastor(s). Our goal is to establish a three-way partnership with you, your church, and ABWE Canada.

Through the whole process, you'll receive email notifications on the status of your application.

Phase 2: Assessment

After your application is approved, you'll begin working on required readings specific to your field of interest. We'll also walk you through basic security and child-safety training, and we may ask you to complete one or more profile tests. If you're serving short-term, you can begin raising funds right away.

Long-term applicants undergo a doctrinal interview to ensure they align with our statement of faith and can articulate core Christian beliefs with biblical support. The interview takes place at your church with your pastor(s) present. You may use your Bible, and married couples can work together.

Phase 3: Orientation

Long-term, Mid-term, and Associate missionaries attend a week-long New Missionary Orientation (NMO) at the ABWE International Headquarters (IHQ) in Harrisburg, PA in March, July, or October. Short-term missionaries complete their orientation online.

NMO immerses you into our vision, helps you evaluate your fit with us, and offers in-depth trainings on topics in missionary life including raising financial support or adapting to culture. You'll bond with other new missionaries. ABWE covers lodging and food, so your only responsibility is travel. Our goal is to help confirm God's call in your life and equip you for prefield life.

During NMO, you'll meet and be interviewed by IHQ leaders. After a formal interview with the IHQ leadership team, a recommendation will be made to the ABWE Canada Board for your appointment. The ABWE Canada Board will then appoint you as an official ABWE Canada missionary.

Each July, we celebrate all new appointees from the past year in a formal Recognition Service welcoming you into the ABWE family. This Recognition Service kicks off our annual conference. Your relatives, friends, and pastors are invited to attend this service as you begin your missionary career.

For more information about NMO, see <https://www.abwe.org/resources/events/new-missionary-orientation> .

Phase 4: Prefield Ministry

On average, new career missionaries spend 18-20 months in prefield ministry, developing the prayer and financial partnerships necessary to go to the mission field and completing crucial ministry training and education. This is an important time of personal preparation and investment in those who are sending you, a time to learn to trust God to meet your spiritual, emotional, and material needs as you develop your support base and prepare to relocate.

At ABWE, we use the term “prefield ministry” to refer to what other organizations sometimes call “deputation” because we truly believe that it is a *ministry*. Prefield provides unique opportunities to minister to hundreds of churches and individuals. It is also an opportunity for you to challenge churches with God’s heart for the nations.

As you share your vision, you are able to evangelize, inspire, and challenge people to partner with you in the Great Commission - whether that is through financial support, prayer support, or joining you on the mission field.

Your prefield journey depends on your background and field of service. Frequently, new missionaries have a heart for missions but lack the biblical knowledge or ministry experience that is essential. That’s where we come in.

OUR PREFIELD PROCESS

1. Reading

Once you’ve become a long-term missionary, your training and partnership development processes will run simultaneously. All ABWE missionaries complete reading assignments in addition to required continuing education and training. Mid-term and short-term missionaries also complete some reading assignments.

2. Education

To provide you with a solid foundation for missionary service, ABWE requires career missionaries to have at least 12 college or graduate credit hours in Bible and theology. For those who do not have these credits, we offer the following courses onsite at the ABWE International office in Harrisburg, PA and online for academic credit:

- Methods of Bible Study
- Old Testament Story (or Roots of Faith: OT)
- New Testament Story (or Roots of Faith: NT)
- Basic Missional Theology

If you've already taken similar courses elsewhere, our training team is able to count those credit hours in place of ABWE's courses. If you're short- or mid-term, you aren't under the same requirements, but it's a good idea to think ahead if you're sensing God leading you into career missions. These courses are available also to members of churches that send and support ABWE missionaries, national partners working with ABWE missionaries, missionaries from other organizations, and anyone else seeking basic-Bible training. Online courses may also be finished while on the field.

3. Ministry Experience

ABWE requires missionaries to have some ministry experience. If your ministry experience is limited, we can work with you to develop customized prefield ministry internships and mentoring opportunities as needed. We aim to include your sending church in overseeing these growth experiences.

4. Linguistic Preparation

Because of the difficulty of learning a new language, we will evaluate your need for language preparation and will provide basic training to help you start this part of your journey to the field. If

more extensive training is needed, we will recommend a language acquisition program, typically completed overseas after deployment

5. Cultural Preparation

Previously acquired cross-cultural preparation is highly recommended for any field, and we'll help assess your current cross-cultural proficiencies and experience. Every prefield missionary conducts an online research study on the country they plan to serve. Completing this reassessment is a prerequisite for Essential Mission Components.

6. Family Life

Our interviews with missionary candidates sometimes reveal a need for counseling. Marriage issues, financial concerns, and parenting struggles don't have to keep you from the field. Our Member Care exists to help you understand and overcome any issues that could derail your ministry and missionary life, and our prefield director supervises the completion of any recommended counseling.

7. Online Support

To track your prefield progress, our online portal, ABWE Central, allows you to report your assignments and provides up-to-date information on your current status. Central also tracks your personal support and financial information.

Additionally, our training leaders, prefield team and global leaders provide valuable accountability by monitoring your assignments and helping you complete your tasks.

Conclusion

We hope this resource has been useful for you as you map out your journey. We want to conclude where we began - with the gospel.

If you are a follower of Christ, recall that you died with Him and have been raised to a new life under His lordship.

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. (Colossians 3:1-3)

In saving us, God calls us to set our minds on the spread of His glory to all nations via the gospel. We each have a role to play, as goers or senders. As you journey on, remember the words penned by C.T. Studd:

*Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ will last.*



Are you interested in taking the next steps?

Call or email us today!

877-690-1009
mobilization@abwe.ca
www.abwe.ca

Training **Leaders**. Planting **Churches**.

Launching **Missions Movements**.