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**Becoming a Missionary**

*By Linda Gawthrop with* [*WorldVenture*](http://www.worldventure.com)

Oftentimes it is in the midst of serving in missions short-term that God begins to tug on your heart and breathe life into the spark of passion that rests in your soul. His voice whispers to you that giving your life to go to other lands to help others find a relationship with Him is His plan for you. It’s so exciting to think about! God wants you! He has created you for this and is calling you to trust Him and follow His voice. So what should you do next?

* **Share what you believe God has told you with your pastor, your family, and other trusted, mature adults who know you and can give you feedback.** Know that some may dismiss what you believe God has said to you or discourage you from pursuing it. Listen to what they say, evaluate it, and pray about it. Then, if you still believe God is calling you, move towards it.
* **Get involved in a group Bible study AND be intentional about studying God’s Word on your own.** There are resources for personal study through your local Christian bookstore or [online](http://www.christianbook.com).
* **Find a mature, godly mentor who will walk with you through this journey. Ask them to share areas where you need to grow.** Those areas may be personal; for example, being willing to abandon relationships that cause you to make bad choices for more encouraging and healthy relationships, or being a hard worker at your job, or managing your money better. The areas may be emotional like dealing with past hurts and offenses, or even spiritual like being more intentional about your relationship with Jesus. Listen to their input and be willing to work on these areas. A good mentor will encourage you in these areas. Related articles: [What to Look for in a Mentor](http://www.focusonthefamily.com/marriage/strengthening_your_marriage/mentoring_101/what_to_look_for_in_a_mentor.aspx), [Mentoring](http://management.about.com/cs/people/a/mentoring.htm)
* **Explore your passions.** What do you love doing? What pumps you up and gives you a sense of satisfaction when you do it? What are you good at? Photography? Playing soccer? Taking care of someone’s physical needs? Finances? Coming alongside and encouraging others? God made you, and He can and will use your desires and your gifts in ministry for Him.
* **Think about areas of the world that fascinate you.** Chances are if you are drawn to a country in Asia or want to go back to the country in Africa where you served short-term, this may be exactly where God is calling you to serve. Again, He knows you and made you. He will not call you to a place that He is not already preparing or will prepare your heart to love. If you think God is calling you to a country, participate in a short-term ministry there.
* **Talk to missionaries.** Ask them questions about the culture for the country in which they serve and about what they recommend you do to prepare for future ministry generally and more specifically, for the country. If you do not yet know where God is calling you, He can use these people to direct you.
* **Research mission organizations.** Where do they serve? What kind of ministries are they involved in? What are their requirements for service? What kind of training do they provide? What is their member care like? If an organization has a representative in your area, meet with them. Ask questions. Choosing the right agency that fits you, your beliefs, gifting and your desired destination is important because hopefully you will be with them for a few years. You want to be sure it is a good relationship and a good fit. Here are some ideas on how to choose a good agency:
	+ [AskAMissionary.com: How do I select a Mission Agency?](http://www.askamissionary.com/question/5)
	+ [WorldVenture: How to choose a mission (PDF)](http://www.worldventure.com/how-to-choose)
* **Prepare.**
	+ Cultivate your ministry skills. Start doing what you hope to do in ministry overseas right now. You will learn skills and abilities that you can use overseas.
	+ Get the education needed to do your desired ministry. It may take you a few years to get the degree needed, but that’s okay. The ministry will be there and you will have the training necessary to be effective in that ministry.
	+ Get the training necessary to become grounded in your beliefs. Many organizations require a certain amount of Bible education. Take Bible classes or missions related classes at a college if it is a Christian college that you are attending. Take the [Perspectives course](http://www.perspectives.org) in your area or take some classes online.
	+ Be a student of the culture in which you hope to serve. Find people from that country in your area and befriend them. Learn from them. Begin to learn the language and use these new friends to tutor you. Read articles or books about the country.
	+ Establish patterns for good physical care. Some countries can be draining on the body and it is important to be in the best shape possible to endure the challenges. Exercise regularly, maintain a good diet, and establish a good sleep pattern.
	+ As much as possible, seek to live debt-free. Sometimes it is not possible given the expenses for higher education. In this case, develop a plan for paying off that debt as soon as possible. Seek a lifestyle that is simple. It makes it much easier to move overseas if you don’t have a lot of belongings to let go of or debt that still needs to be paid.
* **Most importantly, pray and cultivate your relationship with God.** A strong relationship with Him is what will carry you through the ups and downs of preparation and actual service for Him.

Serving God in ministry overseas on a long-term basis is greatly rewarding, but it doesn’t just happen. It takes intentionality…and the leading of God.