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**Missions as a Career**

The following section begins with a readiness quiz and then provides practical steps to take if you are pursuing missions as a career. Several links will bring you to Ask a Missionary, a valuable resource for those seeking information about missions as a career.

**Assessing Your Readiness**

Rate yourself in the eight key areas to identify growth opportunities and assess your level of "mission readiness." Simply read each statement and mark the circle on the continuum that you feel best describes you.

Rate yourself in the eight areas below to identify growth opportunities and assess your level of "mission readiness." Simply read each statement and mark the circle on the continuum that you feel best describes you.

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| --- | --- |
| 1. I understand God's desire to be known throughout the nations. | -+ |
| 2. I am aware of skills/spiritual gifts that I have and how they are needed in the context of missions. | -+ |
| 3. I have a good idea about the formal/informal training that would be needed to enable a missionary to go overseas. | -+ |
| 4. I understand many of the historical figures/movements in missions and how they provide lessons for today. | -+ |
| 5. I value the variety of roles needed to complete the Great Commission. | -+ |
| 6. I am developing relationships that will encourage/support long-term vision. | -+ |
| 7. I am aware of the different kinds of organizations dedicated to missions. | -+ |
| 8. I am a friend and student of other cultures. | -+ |

**Q: What types of training should I consider?**

**A: Look into these five options for training.**

Answer by Steve Hoke and Bill Taylor, veteran missionaries who also grew up on the mission field.

Match the educational mode to your needs, goals, resources, personality, and learning style.   
  
Options include secular colleges and universities, Christian liberal arts colleges and universities, Bible colleges, correspondence study (consider [World Christian Foundations](http://www.worldchristianfoundations.org/)), and Christian graduate schools and seminaries.  
  
Whatever avenue of training or study you choose, it can be a rich phase of your life. It's a time when lifelong friends are made and life partners are often found. Surrounded by like-minded teachers and students, you'll find freedom and support to test your calling and refine the direction of your life.  
  
Answer excerpted from *The Global Mission Handbook*, by Steve Hoke and Bill Taylor.

**A: Study at a Bible college first.**

Answer from Tom, who has been a missionary in Estonia for six years.

Before I came to Estonia, I attended a two-year Bible college. Ten years before that, I graduated from university with a bachelor of science degree in mechanical engineering. If I had to do it over again, I would go to a Bible college first, then to university. At Bible college, I learned crucial things about believing God and following the Holy Spirit. I can't imagine that I would be doing what I'm doing if I had not gone to Bible college. The things we learn at Bible college can make us more successful at whatever we do.

**A: Do Bible college and then be mentored.**

Answer from Paul, humanitarian aid worker in Central Asia with Elim Fellowship.

I would suggest attending a Bible college first and then working for a while before pursuing years in higher education. During that time, be very involved in a local church and possibly be mentored or at least get some on-the-job training. I think that this training and Bible school are essential to develop good people skills and to understand the Bible.

**A: Study at a Christian university.**

Answer from Glen, who has been a missionary among Russian-speaking people for seven years.

A traditional university degree, along with the necessary Bible skills, is probably the best way to go. Many good Christian colleges offer both. To focus solely on missions may cause us to miss an important skill. On the other hand, to miss ministry and Bible training may stifle our knowledge on how to most effectively serve the Lord in missions.

**A: Get experience in your church, and study through a correspondence course.**

Answer from Mert, who has helped pastor a small church and has a master's degree in biblical studies/languages. Mert is currently pursuing a second master's degree by correspondence.

I have been to a state school, a Christian school, and a liberal arts theological school. However, the best education that I've had is not from a traditional educational institution.  
  
I've found that regularly participating in the church and its outreach efforts is essential. A good hour or more each day in prayer and Bible reading has also proven profitable. Small groups are another key way to grow.   
  
As for a training curriculum, the best education I've received has been through *World Christian Foundations* from William Carey International University. It's largely a correspondence school with the benefit of a local face-to-face mentor and then the opportunity to apply the training by teaching someone else.   
  
This method has enabled me to remain active in the community and to learn from a thoroughly mission-oriented curriculum. Think creatively about learning, and remember that the goal is service, not academic credentials.

**A: I attended Bible school, even though I could not read well.**

Answer from Ruth, who has been a missionary in South Asia with Operation Mobilization for twenty years.

Once my first short-term mission trip was over, I thought, *If God is leading me in this direction, I need some training*. My first step was to attend a discipleship-training school. This involved six months of training, with one month in Mexico working among the local churches. I figured that if I were truly going to work overseas, I should get some preparation. Everyone I knew who served God overseas was, in my eyes, a highly educated person, with an undergraduate and graduate degree in theology, medicine, or education. I had struggled with my academic inabilities in high school. How could God use someone like me to serve in another country? I could not read well, I was not a good speaker, I hated being in front of a class, and I preferred to be last rather than first to answer a question. I decided to test the waters. I would apply to Bible school, and if they did not accept me, I would know it wasn't God's will. But surprisingly, they did accept me.  
  
The classes at Bible school were just what I needed. I found a new fascination for the Old Testament. The mission and evangelism classes were challenging and demanding, with all the memorization, but later I realized how valuable those Scripture passages were to my daily life. The doctrine classes were revealing as I learned about the different doctrinal beliefs. At school, we had the opportunity to not only study and work on the campus but also to take part in outreach ministries. All these areas shaped my life more than I could imagine. It is one thing to know God's Word; it's another to live it and to explain God's truths to others who have never heard them. That was twenty years ago. Those preparation years at discipleship training school, Bible school, my year of internship, and then my hands-on training on the field were life-changing.  
  
Excerpted from *Scaling the Wall: Overcoming Obstacles to Missionary Involvement*, by Kathy Hicks.

**A: Those with higher levels of education are better prepared for leadership responsibilities.**

Answer excerpted from an article by Phil Huber in the guide *Tomorrow's Christian Graduate*.

"A missions organization's greatest resource is in the knowledge, skills and spirituality of its people," says Dave Broucek, the training and research coordinator at TEAM. On the mission field, those with higher levels of education are better prepared for leadership responsibilities. Broucek says such missionaries have critical thinking and research skills necessary to see the "big picture" when addressing pressing issues and are less likely to experience burnout or return from the field early.  
  
Phil Casey graduated from a Christian college and went straight to Chile to serve as a missionary involved in evangelism, church planting, and leadership training. During his first two years, he learned through trial and error. He felt unprepared to meet some of the challenges he encountered on the field. So he chose to attend an evangelical seminary. "The education I received at seminary helped me see the bigger picture and gave me a chance to explore the questions that had been raised during my first two years on the field."  
  
Having been on the field first allowed Casey to directly apply his education to his ministry of establishing a theological-education-by-extension program for national church leaders. "The thesis I wrote was directly related to what I had done and was planning to do on the mission field, so this gave me great confidence and insight, as well as practical tools for my future work," Casey says. Casey believes both academic instruction and practical experience are essential for ministry preparation and success. "The two years between Bible college and seminary were vital in helping me 'see the questions' before someone tried to 'give me the answers.' They made me hungry for answers, prepared me for the rigors of graduate-level study, and gave me a context in which to apply what I was learning."

**A: Training develops our spirit and our character.**

Answer from Thomas Hale, who served in Nepal for over twenty years and is now president of International Nepal Fellowship.

The purpose of training is to strengthen weak areas, to improve attitudes, to provide problem-solving skills, and to hasten spiritual and emotional maturation. Training should improve our learning ability, make us more adaptable and flexible, enable us to trust and appreciate others, and above all, deepen our spiritual life.  
  
Answer excerpted from *On Being a Missionary: A Complete Look at What It Takes,* by Thomas Hale.