

Are You Called To Stay?

Serving On A Sending Team

Description

This describes the various responsibilities necessary to provide the critical support for those going on the field. It explains how YOU can get involved in the Great Commission! How YOU can serve as a sender!

for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent?

Romans 10:13-15 (NIV)

Looking at this passage, and the example that the church in Antioch set when sending out the Apostle Paul (Acts 13), we see the necessity for each missionary family to be sent to the field with a strong team of believers back home. The support team provides nurturing and support for them while they are preparing to go, while they are serving in the field and when they return home.

The following team functions have been identified as critical areas that are necessary for a successful support team ministry. The duties of each area are not necessarily limited to a single team member but can be shared among members or in some cases multiple responsibilities can be managed by a single team member or group.

Prayerfully consider serving as a sender in any one or more of these areas of support:

Director / Logistics (all the bits and pieces)

When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, and my scrolls, especially the parchments.

2 Timothy 4:13 (NIV)

The director is responsible for the overall organization and leadership of the entire support team. He has regular communication with the missionary family in order to stay current on updates, needs, and encouraging news. He reports to the other team members and makes them aware of all updates and information. He may manage or coordinate the logistical support required to support the missionary.

Are there family matters that need to be attended to?

- Managing financial affairs back home, taxes, paying bills, insurance, banking.
- Power Of Attorney, post office, bank, insurance company.
- Managing material goods, house, car, mail, etc.
- Relational Care: Sending cards/gifts on behalf of the missionary for weddings, anniversaries, birthdays, graduations, funerals, etc.
- Housing / Transportation requirements while on furlough.
- Assist with organizing and scheduling meetings, speaking engagements while visiting home.
- Mechanism for mobilizing team in event of emergency. (in case an unexpected trip home is required due to an emergency situation either at home or on the field.)

Moral Support – providing encouragement and moral support

Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.

Joshua 1:9 (NIV)

Like cold water to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far [home] country.

Proverbs 25:25 (AMP)

Satan will certainly explore ways to demoralize those laboring in the field. Whether being away from family and friends, differences in culture, or the thought of being “out of sight, out of mind” to those back home, discouragement is possible and probable.

This becomes crucial especially for missionary children. Understanding that they won’t immediately have many friends on the field highlights the importance of ensuring that they have friends back home that care for them. This will help to minimize the feeling of bitterness they may have as “missionary kids”.

This makes the job of encouraging the missionary pivotal. The encouragement team seeks creative ways to inspire the missionary family throughout the year to minimize possible discouragement.

- Care packages
- Encouraging gifts
- Regular communications (voice, video, email, letter) hearing a frequent word from home provides a tremendous lift to those in the field, even a couple of sentences in an email can do wonders. *Note: always be aware of terms that should not be used that might raise a flag and place those serving in different parts of the world more at risk.*
- Cards and letters

Communication Support – letters, cards, email, voice, newsletters, etc.

I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you.

Philippians 2:19 (NIV)

The body of Christ is much more likely to pray for missionaries when they are well informed about them. The communications team is responsible for discovering new and innovative ways to accomplish this task as well as holding workers accountable for any breaks in communication.

- Newsletter – receives and distributes letters and communication from the missionary
- Church Communications – encourages and facilitates two way communications between the field and the sending church.

Prayer Support – pray, pray, pray

And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.

Ephesians 6:18(NIV)

- The prayer team leader is responsible to communicate and encourage the entire serving team to bathe the missionary family in prayer.
- Insure a supply of prayer cards is available for the missions table, Sunday school classes, life groups, etc.

Financial Support

I rejoice greatly in the Lord that at last you have renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you have been concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.

Philippians 4: 10-12(NIV)

Regular financial assistance is the most obvious role members of the financial support team provide.

However, to free your missionary from what might be an awkward situation, it would be wise to have a person designated to follow up on behalf of the missionary;

- with those **(potential supporters)** who may have previously expressed an interest in being part of the financial support team to encourage them to become active participants.
- with those **(inactive supporters)** who are current members of the financial support team who for one reason or another may require “reminding”.
- with those **(active or otherwise supporters)** who might be in a position to provide additional support, either on a regular basis or for specific purposes.
- special project fundraising

Re-Entry Support – more than welcoming home off the plane

And they stayed there a long time with the disciples.

Acts 14:28 (NIV)

Reverse Culture Shock: It is critical to provide the returning missionary an opportunity to debrief, both for their benefit as well as for the edification of the support team.

- Returning workers must debrief / unload and share experiences / frustrations.
- Re-entry shock is an initial response and deals more with environmental changes the returning missionary faces.
- Re-entry stress deals more with struggles relating to conflicts experienced between different cultures (attitude, spiritual motivation, etc.).
- Integration is key. Immediate needs of living and longer range interaction.
- Active listening by the support team is vital.
- Assist them with becoming involved in a meaningful level of ministry, considering each family members specific needs.
- “Re-Entry” by Peter Jordan is an excellent resource that is recommended reading for all members of a sending team.

We Share An Equal Responsibility

- Those who serve as senders share an equal responsibility and privilege with those who go.
- A missionary should never be forced to return due to lack of support.

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