

Editor's Note

Zane Pratt

What does it take to keep missionaries on the field? Missionary life is challenging. These challenges extend to every aspect of life. From the very start of life overseas, culture shock and the task of learning a new language put stress on new missionaries. Very few people find it easy to go from being a competent adult in their home country to being less functional than the average preschooler in their new setting! In many places, missionaries also face physical challenges. These range from weather conditions (either extreme heat and humidity, or severe cold), to unreliable utilities, to unfamiliar foods, to constant sickness, to the necessity of walking and climbing stairs far more than they are accustomed. Team conflict is frequently cited as a major stressor in missionary life. Loneliness and discouragement beset many overseas workers. On top of all these, spiritual warfare takes a severe toll on many missionaries. The enemy of our souls is real, and he is utterly opposed to the work of spreading the gospel where it has never been heard before. He readily exploits every weakness, either to render missionaries ineffective or to take them out of service entirely.

For all these reasons, missionary resilience is a critical issue for everyone engaged in the sending task. The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Missionary recruitment is vital to the work, but it is equally important to keep gospel workers on the field, healthy in every area of life and effective in their work. It usually takes several years for missionaries to hit their stride

in effectiveness, so missionaries whose careers are cut short due to lack of resilience play a diminished role in the work of the Great Commission.

This edition of the Great Commission Baptist Journal of Missions addresses this issue of missionary resilience from several angles. Missionary preparation must build up candidates physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually if they are to thrive on the field. Missionary candidate assessment processes need to be honest about areas needing development before going overseas. Once deployed, missionaries need support to remain on the field and to be effective in their work. It is our prayer that the articles in this journal will be used by God to prepare missionaries better, to keep them on the field longer, to increase their joy in the life God has called them to live, and to enhance their gospel impact.

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