

THINKING ABOUT MISSIONS

If you're reading this document, chances are you're considering working in missions. Our hope is that this brochure will provide answers to the questions you're asking as you carefully consider if missions is right for you. Whether you're interested in Wycliffe Bible Translators specifically, or just looking into different opportunities and organizations, here are some key principles and questions to ask yourself as you take next steps.

We also hope you'll be able to use this as a guide for self-reflection and evaluation as you consider missions work. There are a lot of things to think about, and we can help you ask and answer the right questions! No matter where you are in the process, there are steps you can take right now to get yourself and your family ready to enter the mission field. Wycliffe created this guide to help make that process as easy as possible.

SEEK GOD FIRST

Am I ready to accept God's leading for my life?

Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age. — Matthew 28:19–20

Thinking about missions often begins with questions about God's will and how that calling might involve serving in various capacities. By first drawing close to God, you can better understand

his desires for your life. This is crucial when you're trying to determine where and how he is leading you to serve.

There will be times in your service when you will be acutely aware of your dependence on God to sustain you. Remind yourself to live that way now, spending ample time in prayer and worship, and you'll already have a habit of looking to him for guidance when times of difficulty or uncertainty surface.

Study the Bible diligently and often. Don't just read, but learn to listen as God speaks to you through it. Regularly attend a church or Bible study where you can interact with other Christians, worship God together, study the Bible, and serve others. This is vital to hearing and following God's leading.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

- » What am I doing to strengthen my relationship with God?
- » How am I relying on God to lead me right now?
- » In what ways am I growing in my understanding of the Bible?

NEXT STEPS:

- ✓ **PRAY** for God's work around the world, including those communities still waiting for a Bible in their language. Select a specific group of people to pray for, or start a prayer group to pray for multiple languages or areas of the world.

- ✓ **STUDY** the Bible and make a habit of memorizing Scripture verses. It's important to memorize verses, but it's also critical for missionaries and people here in the U.S. to put the spiritual principles and disciplines found in Scripture into practice in their daily lives. The practices of both memorizing and applying Scripture are necessary to grow our relationship with God.
- ✓ **WORSHIP** with a local church or community of other Christians. As we spend time focusing on God and his love for us, we begin to love people in other countries the same way he does.
- ✓ **SUPPORT** missionaries and their work financially through your local church or other ministries. Celebrate Christ's sacrifice for you by sacrificing some of your stuff for other people.

SEEK SOLID RELATIONSHIPS

Can others see Christ at work in my life?

You are the light of the world — like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father. — Matthew 5:14-16

Make friends with people who share your faith, moral standards and excitement about missions, including an older, wiser person who is knowledgeable about missions and can guide and encourage you. Spend your time together in prayer and Bible study.

It's also a good idea to meet with missionaries who are willing to share their experience. Building and maintaining meaningful relationships with people of various doctrinal, ethnic and cultural backgrounds is important when working closely with others in missions. These relationships will help you learn to communicate with and relate better to many types of people. Look for ways to develop flexibility in your relationships.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

- » Do I have healthy, God-honoring relationships with the people in my family?
- » Am I looking for mentors who can walk me through the process of becoming a missionary?

- » Am I living, and committed to continue living, a lifestyle where serving God is more important than my comfort?

NEXT STEPS:

- ✓ **FIND** missionaries to connect with, and make friends with other people who are interested in missions.
- ✓ **PRAY** for God's leading in all relationships.
- ✓ **SHARE** your faith and your interest in missions work with people who don't know Jesus.

SIMPLIFY YOUR LIFESTYLE

Am I living within my means?

Don't store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal. Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal. Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be. — Matthew 6:19-21

One way you can prepare for missions work is by learning to be content living with less so you'll be free to go when God calls. That includes avoiding new debt and eliminating any existing debts. Credit card and school debt delay many people from serving in missions. Don't lose focus; keep yourself on a budget that allows you to be a good steward of your finances, use extra cash to pay down what you owe, and consider schooling options that won't leave you in debt for years to come.

Also, many organizations require their staff to raise some or all of the funds they need before starting their job in missions. This can be intimidating, but it doesn't need to be. One way to make it easier is to begin developing relationships now with people who might be willing to support you in your ministry later. Depending on God to provide for your financial needs through the partnership of other Christians is an opportunity to see him work in ways that will grow your faith.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

- » Do I have any financial burdens (student loans, credit card debt, home mortgage, etc.) that would make it difficult to serve right now?
- » How am I currently using my money? Am I planning for the future and being responsible, or am I spending it as soon as I earn it?

- » Have I built and maintained good relationships with people who may want to invest in me if I become a missionary?

NEXT STEPS:

- ✓ **WORK** on eliminating or reducing debt.
- ✓ **FIND** biblically-based financial resources to help you make the best choices you can with the money God gives you.
- ✓ **ASK** God to help you get to know people who will want to pray for you and help support your ministry financially.

GET INFORMED

How do I find out more about specific areas of the world where I can serve or organizations that might be a good fit for me?

If the whole body were an eye, how would you hear? Or if your whole body were an ear, how would you smell anything? But our bodies have many parts, and God has put each part just where he wants it. How strange a body would be if it had only one part! Yes, there are many parts, but only one body. — 1 Corinthians 12:17-20

Keep an eye on what is happening in the world and in missions through news articles, credible missions blogs, and other sources. As a missionary, it's important to be aware of the big picture. Plus, God just might lead you to an area of the world or a type of work you'd never thought of on your own!

It also helps to read biographies of missionaries who have already gone to the places you might want to serve. Their stories allow you to see what God is already doing in people's lives in that area of the world and the challenges you might face.

It's also important to know your options! Research multiple organizations, ask questions, attend conferences, and find out who your friends and acquaintances recommend.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

- » Is God calling you to a specific people group or region of the world?
- » Do you share an organization's doctrinal beliefs and vision? How about its philosophy on cultural sensitivity, denominational alliances, etc.?

NEXT STEPS:

- ✓ **READ** missionary biographies to learn from men and women who have already been where you want to go.
- ✓ **ASK** your church which organizations it is working with already and get to know those organizations.
- ✓ **FIND** a class or learning opportunity focused on the theology of missions and the great commission, like **Perspectives on the World Christian Movement**.

START SERVING NOW

How can I begin serving right where I am?

God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another. Do you have the gift of speaking? Then speak as though God himself were speaking through you. Do you have the gift of helping others? Do it with all the strength and energy that God supplies. Then everything you do will bring glory to God through Jesus Christ. All glory and power to him forever and ever! Amen. — 1 Peter 4:10-11

You don't need to wait until you're overseas to be a missionary. Become an active member in your local church and encourage your family to join you in serving.

IDEAS TO GET STARTED:

- » Serve on the missions committee.
- » Teach a children's class.
- » Become an usher.
- » Lead a prayer group.
- » Reach out to international students and families in your area.

QUESTIONS TO ASK:

- » Are there ways I can serve my community better?
- » What does it mean to have a missions mindset?
- » What are my spiritual gifts? How can I use them to make a difference for the kingdom?

NEXT STEPS:

- ✓ **CONSIDER** writing a mission statement for your life and use this to prioritize your activities.
- ✓ **ASSESS** your spiritual gifts and personality traits with tests to help you better understand how to use your God-given strengths in missions.

- ✓ **LOOK** for opportunities to serve your community right now, whether it's by volunteering at church or a local charity, or doing something else that God inspires you to do.
- ✓ **IDENTIFY** the skills God has given you, and think about new ways you can use them to serve.

LEARN MORE

What's next?

Let the message about Christ, in all its richness, fill your lives. Teach and counsel each other with all the wisdom he gives. Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God with thankful hearts. And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father. — Colossians 3:16-17

START THE CONVERSATION

If you're considering service with Wycliffe, we have missions coaches that can connect with you and explain the specific types of training you'll need for the line of work you're interested in. We work with a variety of schools and organizations that offer classes in translation and linguistics, information technology, leadership development, Scripture engagement through media, and more.

You can also learn about the many types of jobs needed to support Bible translation at wycliffe.org/serve.

RESOURCES AND RECOMMENDED READING

- » "Operation World" by Patrick Johnstone
- » "In Search of the Source" by Neil Anderson
- » "Scaling the Wall: Overcoming Obstacles to Mission Involvement" by Kathy Hicks
- » "The Treasure Principle" (book and Bible study) by Randy Alcorn
- » "Free and Clear" by Howard Dayton
- » Dave Ramsey
daveramsey.com
- » "6 Sweet Ways to Study Scripture"
wycliffe.org/savor
- » "A Place at the Table"
wycliffe.org/table