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HEALTH AND PSYCHOLOGY FOR MISSIONARIES

We may have read a number of missionary biographies in our lifetime, and most of the time we read all the thrilling, exciting things of the missionary's life and the worthwhile things that have been done. We may read about a few of the problems with the witch doctors, or of the wild animals, or of demon possession and other spiritual problems, or of the problems faced by some of the new converts, but we seldom read about the personal problems the missionary has had or is having, such as discouragement or personality clashes.

These can turn out to be disturbing factors, especially when we learn that about 25% of the people who go out to the mission field, planning to make it a career, come home at the end of the first term and never return. There are a number of legitimate reasons for "missionary drop-outs," but this 25% covers such things as personality clashes, inability to adjust to new cultures and climates, loneliness, monotony or discouragement.

There are no doubt good reasons why missionary biographies do not cover some of these problems in that such a book is not the place to "get things off your chest!" But, a missionary is a human being and he has problems just like any other human being. (He is not super-human or above human problems just because he is a missionary.) Sometimes, too, because of the unique circumstances of the person overseas he may have a few more problems, such as physical inconveniences, cultural shock or loneliness added to this list of problems. Just because a person is a missionary does not remove the possibility of frustrations, homesickness, or differences of opinion. There are helps and answers and solutions (not platitudes or pious phrases) for most of these problems, and for the most part these answers are in the Bible. Now is the time to look at a few.

1. YOUR PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

This is one of the most important things of your whole ministry. And, it doesn't matter where you serve, at home or overseas, single or married, minister or layman. However, your relationship to God does not depend on you. It is all of God. God is the Great Initiator. We sometimes get the idea that God gives or withholds good things depending on whether we have been "good" or "bad." We have thought in terms of "rights," and of what is due us. All too soon we come to take even gifts as being no more than our due -- because we are so good, or have worked so hard, or have believed all the right things, or are so charming or so beautiful. How many times has someone said, "Why should this happen to me? Look at all I have done for the church!" We try to earn the admiration of our fellow Christians by working hard on this or that project. This is the adult world we live in. We delude ourselves that everything we have has come because of our intrinsic worth -- because we deserve it -- because of our standing before God.

In a few sentences Jesus struck that idea off the record. God is gracious. He has come to us, not we to Him. Nothing we get from His hand is the reward for our goodness; or punishment for failure; there isn't any, either goodness or reward. The

earth we walk on, the air we breathe, everything about us is God's creation. Our part has been to misuse it all until we have become hopelessly lost. God has come to us and given us His salvation in Christ, just the way a loving parent gives food and clothing and care to his child.

When we have been obedient, have concentrated on the very nature of God Himself, we simply find ourselves experiencing the love that has been coming toward us all the time. God does not send more love when we behave and less when we are disobedient. He loves, because He is God; and God is love, and He loves us just as we are. Because of Him, not because of us.

When our relationship with God is close and smooth and confident, we discover more of the love that has always been there for us, but is not given in greater measure. He has always given His love fully and completely, and He will always give it that way. When we grasp this truth, the transforming power of that love can begin to touch us. We are freed daily because daily we break loose from the entrapment of time and enter the captivity of love where there are no barriers or fences. Thus, we are safe within the limits of God's love, the nature of God. We are not God's children because we are good enough, or because we have done the right things. Being a Christian has nothing to do with being good; it has to do with God. There are no requirements for becoming a Christian except recognition of our need of a Saviour.

2. PRAYER

What about the times when problems and situations press so hard that you just cannot pray? If we wanted to be "pious" we could say, "This is the time you need to pray the most." This, however, may be the time when you need to sit for a period of time and just listen to the Lord. It could be called "meditation." Allow Him to quiet you and speak to you. One of the biggest "hang-ups" as Americans is that we have lost the art of meditation and quietness. We feel guilty if someone catches us just sitting, seemingly doing nothing. And, we are suspicious of people we catch sitting, supposedly dreaming. Allow God to bring to your mind some of the verses you have learned and memorized, or some of the thoughts you have heard from sermons, or your own Bible study. Allow the Holy Spirit to work. This is one of His assignments. It isn't necessary to say words. Communication is many times accomplished through thoughts and attitude. Don't be impatient, either. The first time it may take a long time for you to "hear." It takes a while to get your ears tuned!

3. INTROSPECTION

Certainly it is good to look at ourselves, our motives, our mistakes and faults. But, too much of this can be deadly. Too much introspection and self-effacement can be self-centeredness and not really of the Lord. He tells us to look at them honestly, do what you can about them, profit as much as possible from what you discover, and then forget it and move forward. It is far better to look at the Lord Jesus than at ourselves. We are to look ahead at what the Lord Jesus can do for us and what He can make of us. When we finally come to the end of ourselves and see our only hope is in Him -- confess these conditions and give up -- we find help. Have you ever heard "Let go and let God"? Give up the self-diagnosis and the frantic efforts to avoid failure: physical, mental and emotional, and give them all to Jesus Christ. At this point then, be willing to have goals fulfilled or not. Then strangely, this is like dying -- to give up dreams of success in any venture and live only for today. Paradoxically, it is at this point that we begin to live again. We quit fretting about tomorrow, about the theoretical, and are free to begin working with the real -- the hours in today. I begin to notice the needy individuals around me. I see the shapes of the trees, the color of the flowers and

hear the sounds of the world around me. I come out of the 'pit' of introspection, which sealed me off in an inner, windowless box, where I have been worrying about myself.

However, having gone through these times helps me and sensitizes me to the signs of the same thing in others. It helps me to help someone who shows signs of lonely agony that I might have missed otherwise. As I crawl out of the "slough of despond" and of self toward Christ and others, I am more open to what He can do through me to bring others a little of His love. It is like Paul says in Philippians, "I am willing to carry the burden of persecution, if others seeing me, are able to gain strength to carry a similar burden." As I come out of my misery, I am a more caring person.

4. GUILT COMPLEXES

What are Christians doing with guilt complexes, you may well ask? Strange as it may seem, there are many who are secretly carrying around guilt feelings and allowing them to ruin their lives and effective ministry, simply because they are not taking God at His Word. I John 1:9 says -- if we confess our sins, He will forgive our sins. There are interesting thoughts here. First of all, the sins confessed are the sins forgiven. In other words, it seems that God wants us to be specific about the sin. Then when Satan tries to bring it up again, we can fall back on God's promises of forgiveness. Remember, nothing really depends on us or on our feelings -- ALL depends on the reliability of God and His Word!

When God pardons us, He pardons us all the way. When He pardons us, He enters our lives and frees us from the fears and the guilt of that sin. "If the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed." We rely on Him, not on the pardon. We need pardoning for other things and further pardoning as we live the days of our lives. We cannot be "free indeed" unless the One who frees is continually with us, continuing to free us.

We must see that full cleansing is available to us only in the Pardon of Christ, and we must recognize and confess our continuing need of His cleansing. We are not bound by observances in order to be free and cleansed. We are bound only to the freeing presence of the Son of God. It is He who is "faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." His pardon and cleansing are all of a piece, all part of His person, all motivated by His love. He does not receive us and then decide whether or not we are worthy to be pardoned. We are pardoned all at once. We may not understand this, or even want this. We have forgotten to be childlike. We tie strings to what we give, and we remain convinced that God does the same. We go by feelings instead of by fact. God's Word is the fact.

Our receptivity to God is also limited by our refusal to receive all those other people He loves just as much as He loves us. Did Jesus ever refuse anyone who came to Him? No, not one.

5. BE YOURSELF

To be mature is to be objective about yourself. There are two diametrically opposite directions which pride can follow -- two extreme views it can take. One is obvious, the other is more subtle and more insidious. One is conceit, and the other is contempt. Both are evil.

Conceit is evil because it overrates man, and disregards the gifts and blessings of God. I may not be hypocritical, but there is a type of false humility that is utter pretension, since it seeks double credit not only for modesty but for recognition of the

gifts it pretends not to have. Self-centeredness is evil because it overlooks the inestimable worth and dignity of one for whom Christ died. There is a basic sense in which love of self is right -- "Love your neighbor as yourself." A low view of self is often reflected in a low view of others.

"Take a sane view of yourself," Paul says. Self-inventory is legitimate in order that a man may evaluate the measure of faith God has given him and then make the most of the gifts. Don't think more highly of yourself than you should, but by the same token do not think less of yourself than you should.

It is important that a man take a sober view of himself because every Christian is indispensable in God's sight. God has built into every person certain talents, gifts and capacities that distinguish him from all others. They are there at birth, intended by God to be exploited, developed and used to His own glory and for blessing to men. Think of the infinite originality of God. Every finger print is different. Every personality is different.

Oswald Chambers has wisely said, "Never make a principle of your experience, let God be as original with others as He has been with you." A Christian ought not to try to impose the details of his life upon another, or demand the same kind of spiritual experience from everyone.

Full satisfaction in life will come only when these built-in talents, aptitudes and capacities are discovered, developed and refined in order to be creative and productive. One of the major tragedies in life is that so many people never become or realize themselves. They are something less than they could be -- operating with less efficiency than their potential. There is but one possible solution to this problem -- Romans 12:1 & 2, "So then, my brothers, because of God's many mercies to us, I make this appeal to you: Offer yourselves as a living sacrifice to God, dedicated to his service and pleasing to Him. This is the true worship that you should offer. Do not conform outwardly (or allow the world to squeeze you into it's mold) to the standards of this world, but let God transform you inwardly by a complete change of your mind. Then you will be able to know the will of God -- what is good, and is pleasing to Him and is perfect." TEV (see also II Corinthians 5:17)

Man was made for fellowship with God, and to be ruled by God. Man is never himself until he submits to this Divine rule. The man who will not yield himself to Jesus Christ remains something less than he could be. The harder a man tries to be himself without being right with God, the less like himself he becomes and the more like everyone else he is. Aptitude tests may help, but God alone can bring out the original with its distinctive features.

The heart of Christian maturity lies in this personal relationship between the Son of God and the child of God, the Christian. The way to Christian maturity is to guard, at all costs, this vital relationship.

6. RELATIONSHIP WITH MISSION BOARD

Essentially, you are now with an evangelical mission board with whose policies you are in full agreement. You probably have even read and signed an agreement concerning this. You have read the policies, know about your job, and have entered into your relationship with them with full knowledge of what you are expected to do, and what you can expect of the mission board. However, because you are dealing with human beings there will be times when communications break down and there are misunderstandings. How should these be handled?

It is not always easy to rebuild broken relationships, so things should be brought out into the open as soon as they occur, not in heat or in anger or bitterness but in honesty. Control is the key. This way no hard feelings build up. This ought to be done with tact, finesse and Christian love. (However, the latter should never be pre-faced or followed by, 'I do this in Christian love, of course!') By listening to the other person's point of view and understanding his side, many of these problems can be solved. There is also a certain amount of "give and take" that must happen between you and the other person or persons. You have to be willing to give a little, too. Both sides need to be flexible. Most serious problems could be avoided if both sides lend a 'listening ear.'

7. DIFFERENCES IN MISSION POLICY

Just in case you haven't already discovered it, there is not an organization in the world with which you are going to agree fully with everything. Even though you have carefully read and studied the doctrinal statement and the policies of the mission board, in the excitement of planning to go overseas, perhaps, you have not seen certain parts of it that you could not agree with. But then, when you get on the field and begin living this policy in actual practice you may become aware and annoyed at some things you do not like or feel are right or fair. So what do you do now?

Remember, there are some vital points of life and belief, and others that are comparatively unimportant. You must decide whether or not something you disagree with is of first or secondary importance. You signed an agreement saying that you will abide by mission policy. In some cases (depending on your attitude) you may be able to change some of these things. Some of the policies may need to be brought up-to-date, or into keeping with reality. You may be able to suggest better methods and approaches, but you do not always do this by "storming the fort." Sometimes it is done in quietness and confidence.

Sometimes, you can express your opinion or point of view in a quiet, calm way and then drop it for a few days. Give the other person a chance to think it over. During this time you should be praying about it and asking God to work in your heart and mind, too. This is a time to be silent and not have an argument or even an exchange of opinion. Sometimes, talking smothers reason. Bring it up again several days later, or when you feel the time is right, never in resentment or bitterness. Present a good case and all the positive and good things about the idea and then leave it alone. Something will happen. It may happen to both of you.

8. SUPPORT AND MAILING LIST

The Mission helps you to raise your support by mail, and in person when possible. Therefore, it is necessary to prepare a mailing list of your friends, churches and organizations who are interested in you and the work you are going to do. Prayer support is as important as financial support. We do not want you to be worrying about finances on the field, but want you to give full concentration to the work at hand. Each candidate's financial arrangement is considered individually and arranged before coming to the field. Detailed procedures are given after arriving on the field. Please present questions or problems, so that they do not grow into big problems or resentment.

9. YOUR SUPPORTERS

During the whole term on the field, it is important to keep in contact with the people who are your supporters -- both prayer and financial. Supporters are interested in knowing what you are doing and in keeping in touch with you. Your quarterly letters along with the Mission's bulletins and your personal notes will help keep your prayer and financial support coming. It is God's plan that we all pray, send and/or go!

10. LONELINESS

It doesn't take an isolated spot on the earth to cause loneliness. Just a change from the usual routine, lack of the proper rest, a broken relationship or a guilty conscience can bring on loneliness. Being alone isn't always the problem. You can be with a group of people and still be lonely. What do you do about loneliness, and what causes it?

What do you want most when you are lonely? Not a book but a person, a person's time, interest, a listening and sympathetic ear. You need someone to sit down with you and just talk, or just be there if you want to talk. You need them to share themselves with you, their thoughts and feelings, some of the interesting things that have been happening to them, and share with you some of their problems, too.

What do you think causes loneliness? Part of the cause is self-pity (not all). There are times when it is legitimate. But most of the time you can find another person who needs help and this is the best antidote for loneliness or "the blues." (Matthew 28:20)

11. HOMESICKNESS

This can be a real "disease," and it is real. Again, the best thing to do to counteract it is to get busy doing something for someone else, or take a little break in the routine. Physical activity is the best thing -- something that occupies both your mind and your hands, and perhaps other people: teaching a class, for which you need to prepare; talking with and counseling people; going to see someone in the hospital; working in the garden; cleaning out the closets; cooking a meal for someone who is sick or shut-in; doing some sewing, etc.

12. MEALTIME

It is a good plan for you to make mealtime a real time of joy. It should be more than just a time to eat but a time of relaxation and fellowship. "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine" (Proverbs 17:22). You eat alone? Don't just gulp your food but sit down, relax and enjoy it. Take your time. It is more healthful and better for you. You are in a hurry? You aren't in that big a hurry. It's one way to keep the ulcers away, too. (This may have to be a discipline for you.) Interruptions during a meal should be avoided, if at all possible.

13. FRUSTRATIONS

There are frustrations for missionaries in many areas of their living. Sometimes the people they spend the most time with disappoint them. These same people may misunderstand it all, or still not come to Jesus Christ. Sometimes the frustration is with ourselves because we don't understand the language well enough and cannot communicate with the people as well as we wish we could. Or perhaps, we are slow to understand their way of life and customs and the difference is frustrating because we don't seem to be getting anything done. It may be that some important task cannot be done because there isn't the right kind of equipment to do it. The job is held up and/or stopped because people at home are slow in sending support or in seeing it in the same light of priority. Some missionaries have so much to do and so little time to get it done -- this can be a big frustration.

Single missionaries have to face the inevitable that there are never enough single men on the field. It could cause resentment, jealousy and bitterness if not turned over

to the Lord and committed to Him. But, there are also frustrations for the married missionaries as well. The wives of missionaries find they cannot participate in mission activities as much as they would like because of the responsibilities of family and home.

Some of these things must be faced before the person goes to the mission field, and find a normal adjustment, so as not to inflict his or her frustrations upon fellow missionaries and upon the people to whom they are ministering. There are no pat answers for solving these problems, and they will not be solved overnight. Time in prayer and the reading of the Word of God and other books would be helpful. Also, this might be a place where some good counselling would be of help. This could be done by a minister who is wise and objective.

The reading of some of the missionary biographies will be helpful in solving some of these problems. In knowing what other missionaries have done under similar feelings and circumstances, there is help and encouragement. (The Small Woman, about Gladys Aylward is a good one for single women missionaries.) Many single women have a tremendous contribution to make, and can find a real purpose for life in their dedication to Christ.

14. MARRIAGE

For many single women missionaries this can be a real problem. There are more women on a mission field than men. This is something that must be faced before a single woman goes to the field. This can also be a problem for single men, too. It may be that none of the women available are what he needs (or wants) in a wife! He may be afraid to date any of them for fear they will get 'ideas.'

It is a fact, however, that many single missionaries make a marvelous contribution to the work of the Lord and there are many compensations in their work for Him which make them real assets on the field. They often can go places where men cannot go. If a single missionary allows it, frustrations may set in and become the root of a barren and fruitless ministry. A great deal depends on attitude. A friend of mine used to say to me, about this matter of marriage: "Them that is wish they weren't; and them that ain't wish they was!"

There are unmarried people who succeed in developing their personalities because they have come to terms with themselves. They do not spend their physical and emotional energies on unhealthy imagination, or physical and moral resistance to what life has dealt them. They are also able to overcome some of the social stigma that goes along with being single.

Also, there are married couples on the mission fields who have lost communication with one another. Perhaps, the husband has become so involved in his work and the ministry that he forgets his wife and family need him too. It is a simple matter of thoughtfulness and consideration, even though they may be way out on an isolated station. Special effort may have to be made to spend time together -- just talking and sharing dreams and ideas.

The wife, too, needs to remember that she is a woman and at least attempt to keep her clothes stylish and her hair done attractively. She should be careful not to go around in old clothes with her hair pinned back conveniently. (I said, "a little extra effort.") These things can be important to the people with whom you are working as well. As they see you taking care of your "earthen vessel," they may realize the value of a human being and see a little more of the beauty of God's creation. Sometimes mission-

aries have given a strange impression to people around them of what Christians should look like. That isn't exactly what Jesus meant when he said we were to be a "peculiar people."

15. INITIAL EMOTIONAL ADJUSTMENTS

Going into a new culture, an unfamiliar language, and a different way of life is not always easy. In the beginning these things are interesting and fun, but when you know you will have to live this way over a period -- a long period -- of time it is entirely different. The prayer: "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can and the wisdom to know the difference, " is very wise at this point. Accepting the situation will help a great deal. And there is a lot of difference between accepting these things and resigning one's self to them. Resignation carries with it a little resentment and bitterness about it all, and this would soon eat at, ruin and eventually destroy the spirit. Accepting helps toward spiritual growth, maturity and also discipline. Accepting is a part of our trust in God, that He knows what He is doing, and He is doing all things for our good, with a good and loving purpose. Although, we do not have full understanding of what He is doing or why.

16. HEALTH

Certain health precautions are always necessary on a mission field, no matter where you are. There are some simple rules to follow: may have to boil water at times; take immediate care of insect bites; if medication is necessary, be sure you take it; be cautious in the purchase and preparation of food, especially meat; wash your hands frequently; dispose of garbage, the safest best way; sanitize toilets; eat a proper diet (even though you eat some of the native foods you can still get the vitamins and minerals you need from them) -- these are just a few. If these rules are followed, the missionary will find that health is not a problem.

Remember that some emotional problems can cause health problems. There are books that will help you keep abreast of some of the latest medical and preventative measures. Some good health rules can be followed. Diseases among missionaries are caught from the local populace, just as when living at home. If we are overcautious and anxious about ourselves, we can weaken our power of example to our fellow workers in self-denial and devotion. "If you follow the precautions, then you can ask the Lord to protect you!"

17. PERSONALITY CLASHES

The sum total of frustrations, loneliness and monotony often leads to bitter friction, with an accusation of fellow workers. The territory of the Evil One, the accuser of the brethren, is being invaded. To those who react with bitterness and resentment to their environment and their ministry as a missionary, it is a cause of "missionary drop-out." Much friction uses up the energy which should have been utilized to produce fruitful results.

Even if the missionary encounters personality differences, like those of Paul and Barnabas, he should evaluate and face them frankly rather than allow the failure to solve them be the cause of guilt feelings. Sometimes the solution is found in the same way Paul and Barnabas found theirs, namely, in the heightened activity of two non-competing missionary projects in the place of one. Differences in personalities are given to keep life from getting dull and boring!

Because people are people, a few personality clashes are inevitable. Here is one

of the pitfalls: when a clash occurs each person seems to blame himself for this, or does not put the blame where it belongs. It is not right to always blame the other person, but we must see things for what they really are -- personality clashes. In this kind of honesty there is often help. No blame need be laid on either person, but a greater amount of understanding and prayer is needed. There should be objectivity, kindness, and above all brotherly love with no "I love him in the Lord, but..."

This is one place where the three hardest statements in the English language could be used -- "I am sorry," or "Please forgive me," or "I was wrong." There is a scriptural injunction, too, in James 5:16. Being willing to confess our faults to one another, or admitting that we were wrong is often the one thing that will heal a wound quickly.

Believe the best of people and expect the best of people!

18. MONOTONY

One of the real drags on the life and energy of the missionary is the monotony of the life. This might happen to someone who is in an isolated spot more than to a person in the city. It can happen to anyone anywhere. The activities of the daily routine become very monotonous, and it could be deadly. This depends on the attitude of the person involved. There are some who would enjoy this kind of quietness and really get a lot done. This would be ideal for reading, thinking, studying, uninterrupted counselling, small group ministries, or starting a Bible study or discussion group. For others it would be most difficult to seldom see other people or have no break in the routine. If this is the case, then the missionaries themselves should plan some other activities to break the routine or monotony and do something different. Get some paint-by-number pictures, take a correspondence course from a college, write letters, or go on a fishing or hunting trip, but break the routine. This could be a part of the planning, and be deliberate. Plan it far enough ahead so that you will enjoy the anticipation. Ask God for guidance. Oswald Chambers says, "Make a habit of having no habits."

19. MOODS

Some people have more problem with moods than others. But a lonely place on a mission station can bring these to the best of us. "Moods" are an interesting psychological study. But, Oswald Chambers in, My Utmost for His Highest, has something to say about this problem of moodiness. Let me quote: "Many of us prefer to stay at the threshold of the Christian life instead of going on to construct a soul in accordance with the new life God has put within. We fail because we are ignorant of the way we are made; we put things down to the devil instead of our own undisciplined natures. Think what we can be when we are roused!"

"There are certain things we must not pray about -- moods, for instance. Moods never go by praying, moods go by kicking. A mood nearly always has its seat in the physical condition, not in the moral. It is a continual effort not to listen to the moods which arise from physical condition, never submit to them for a second. We have to take ourselves by the scruff of the neck and shake ourselves, and we will find that we can do what we said we could not. The curse with most of us is that we won't. The Christian life is one of incarnate spiritual pluck."

No further comment need be made on this. Sometimes we have let a habit take us over and be master of us instead of our being master of the habit.

20. DISCOURAGEMENT

Someone has well said that discouragement is the devil's best weapon. Discour-

agement disturbs our ability to think clearly. This is a time when we need healing just as much as a person who is physically ill. How did God handle Elijah's discouragement? (I Kings 19) First of all, what was the cause of the discouragement? Elijah had been working hard and was tired. Often the cause of our discouragement has root in a physical need: tiredness, hunger or worry. God understood Elijah and sent him out into the country for a rest. There he slept; was awakened every once in a while to be fed and then went to sleep again. As soon as he was rested, God sent him back to work.

You may find yourself in a situation that causes discouragement. What is the best way to cope with it? What can you do to keep from letting it get you down?

Concentrate on God rather than the difficulty. By concentrating on God, the difficulty will shrink to actual size. Think of the Lord as the stronghold from which you may come forth with spiritual reinforcements to confront your difficulties with new power. Do some reading in the great Christian and devotional classics and some missionary biographies. Discover what others have done to help.

The cure for discouragement is hope. Our hope is in God. Practice the belief that God will drive off discouragement.

21. MATURITY

What does it really mean to "grow up"? Certainly, more than anyone else, a missionary needs to be mature. What then is maturity? Maturity is being able to discipline one's self and take the responsibility for one's own actions and ultimately for others. Maturity means that we do not react instinctively to the irritations and frustrations of life. Mature people do not strike out blindly when they do not like what happens to them. Growing does not mean we no longer have the emotions and instincts we had as children. It does mean they must be developed, trained, disciplined and controlled so as to be fully realized and usable. Only applied discipline makes children into adults. Learning and maturing is hard work and sometimes even painful.

The TEV puts Ephesians 4:15, "We must grow up in every way in Christ." Maturity is a part of the Christian life. The mature person is not absorbed in himself or his own problems but in a genuine concern for others. Children are always measuring what they have by others, or what they do by what others do. They are always afraid someone is going to get ahead of them. It's a very small world when we revolve around ourselves, avoid responsibility, and are jealous for our own rights and privileges. A great deal that is ineffective in Christianity is due to childishness and immaturity.

Immaturity also causes a lack of being realistic among Christians. We can get so involved in prayer meetings, testimony meetings and Bible study groups that we don't even see or hear the people around us who are in need. This may be a need they have for physical things but even more it may be the need for spiritual or emotional things. We have seen people who were interested in sending C.A.R.E. packages to Africa, but ignored, or couldn't be bothered by, the needs of the negro down the street. Our lives must be a balance between spiritual things and the meeting of others' needs. We need the fellowship and encouragement from one another, the fellowship of other believers, the bearing of one another's burdens. This is only for "refueling," then we go out into the world again, becoming more and more aware of the needs of others, not just "witnessing." We are to be the salt of the earth in our daily lives -- preserving, flavoring, and purifying the society in which we live.

We have a pattern for living and witnessing: "growing up into the measure of the stature of Christ." We must give up our childish playing at witnessing and begin to

meet people where they are -- really meet them.

22. ATTITUDES

The change in attitude which many new missionaries have, after the initial novelty of living abroad has worn off, is sometimes striking. (It is part of the culture shock.) The fire of enthusiasm which they brought with them turns to ashes not long after they encounter a few misunderstandings, problems and frustrations. Your attitude toward these situations depends a great deal on your relationship to Jesus Christ, your willingness to be flexible, and your honesty with yourself and God. You will probably have to be the one to adapt. You can't change traditions based on a heritage of generations. To attempt to change "the national system" could "rock the boat," and "the national system" may well be useful and of service to the rest of the people around you.

One of the chief sources of frustration is the preconception of a job overseas -- often as a result of a lack of experience, misleading "glamour," publicity and enthusiasm. The missionary may have thought he was going to a foreign country to change the world, then discovers that the people there aren't interested in change. In fact, they resent his efforts. This is where you must come to terms with yourself, your goals and your motives. Perhaps, your goals need redefining, and you yourself have need of some growing and maturing. Two years from now when you look back at these experiences you will see that through these frustrations and disappointments you did the most growing. You will see the greatest evidence of what you were able to accomplish. EXPERIENCE IS OFTEN RICHER IN RETROSPECT.

To your personal values you must add the special concerns which the ministry of the mission abroad makes necessary. Irresponsible behaviour can have undesirable consequences for your work and your ministry, as well as your own well-being and reputation. On the other hand, how you take situations and experiences may be your making and will serve to your benefit for the rest of your life.

You are the symbol of a Christian, an ambassador of your church, a representative of your country, no matter where you go or what you do. If you are short with someone in the market, this may be the way they see all Christians and all Americans. If you are sensitive to the habits, customs and feelings of the people around you, you have been a good Ambassador for Christ and for your country.

Conclusion: . STRIVE to maintain BALANCE, spiritually, emotionally, and physically, in your commitment to God's will DAILY!

Suggested reading material available at Christian book stores:

- Spirit Controlled Temperament, by Tim LaHaye
- Overseas Short Term Service, by Judy Barr
- For Missionaries Only, by Joseph L. Cannon, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Mich.
- Puerto Rico Living, Tourist Bureau