

## **TOO VALUABLE TO LOSE**

**By Richard Won**

Cross-Cultural Workers are precious and priceless servants of the Lord. We cannot afford to lose any of them. Many of these workers have paid a heavy price to respond to the call of God into the mission field. They have made all kinds of sacrifices to go into hard and hostile places to serve in mission. The least that the sending agency can do is to provide pastoral or member care for these precious servants of the Lord. We cannot assume that someone else will care for them. Member care is no longer an option. We desire to see cross-cultural workers thrive in the field, not merely survive.

From the time the new cross-cultural workers arrive in the field, till their time of retirement, the journey is tough and challenging. It is not a question of whether these workers need member care, but rather when they need member care. Member care starts from recruitment of the workers. Good member care for workers must be a focused, deliberate and necessary part of our sending strategy and policy.

### **Why do cross-cultural workers need member care?**

Cross-cultural workers are constantly faced with many challenges and dangers. Mission work is a spiritual battle in enemy's territory where Satan reigns. Our workers face intense spiritual warfare daily. *"For we are not fighting against flesh and blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly place."* (Eph 6:12 NLT)

We must constantly pray for our workers to remain strong and alert against the evil forces that seek to discourage or hinder them. Good member care involves praying faithfully for our workers.

My wife, Clara, and I served many years in a South East Asian nation which was under military rule at that time. We could not travel to some black areas or locations which were restricted to foreigners for fear of harm. We were constantly watched by local military intelligence. What kept us going was the ongoing, fervent and faithful prayers of God's people back home. A couple of times we avoided serious accidents by cancelling or delaying certain trips. In one particular incident, we were supposed to visit the mall at 12.00 pm. However, we were called to a prayer meeting and could go to the mall until after 3.00 pm. Exactly at 12.00 pm, a bomb went off and there were many fatalities. The Lord rescheduled our time at the last minute to save our lives. Therefore, please pray for your cross-cultural workers. Pray that they will finish well serving the Lord even in hard places.

### **The example of Jesus Christ caring for His disciples.**

Jesus called the disciples to be with Him (Mark 3:14). He established a relationship with them. He mentored, coached and confronted them. Jesus asked, "Do you understand what I have done?" And then He said, "You should follow My example." The member care providers back

home are to provide pastoral care for the staff in the field. We must follow the example of Jesus who is the Good Shepherd. If you are a leader, you are also a shepherd and, therefore, responsible to care for your workers.

### **What are the benefits of good member care?**

Good member care can reduce attrition rate and increase retention of missionaries serving in the field. It can prevent workers from leaving the mission field prematurely. When the workers are cared for, they are more likely to stay longer at their calling with their sending agency. They will become resilient, healthy and effective in service

Professor Bobby Clinton from Fuller Seminary in his leadership research says, "Out of 400 leaders in the bible, only 80 leaders finish well which is 20%. So only 20% of leaders finish well or 2 out of 10 leaders finish well. Many of our cross-cultural workers are lost from mission service for reasons that could have been prevented if member care were provided. One worker lost is far too many.

Good member care builds healthy relationships. It also provides practical helps, debriefing, and training. Conflict in the field is normal. Many workers need to learn how to address and overcome conflict. Training in mediation and reconciliation can be helpful.

Lack of finance can be another reason why workers leave the field prematurely. With good member care, we can help and encourage workers to learn how to do effective fundraising or friends-raising.

Good member care can enhance fruitfulness in the field. Appropriate affirmations can improve morale which could then result in increased effectiveness. When cross-cultural workers are supported and cared for, they will not give up easily. They would thrive in the field as they are reminded that what they are doing is important kingdom work.

### **Who is responsible to provide member care?**

The Bible says, "*Shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain but eagerly.*" (1 Peter 5:2). It is our responsibility to care for workers we send out into the field. The Lord commands it. It is not an option whether to care or not. These workers have been entrusted to us. Therefore, we have the vital task to care for them. It is too valuable to lose our workers

May the Lord help us to do our part to provide good member care for our workers.

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