



The Good Missionary

A Guidebook for Missionaries

David Moore, Editor

CONTRIBUTIONS FROM MIKE TARDIVE, TOM FITTIS,
ROY CLEMENTS, GRAHAM FORBES, JOHN JONES,
DARREN ROGERS AND MARTIN WICKENS

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Foreword

Thank you for surrendering to the mission field of the United Kingdom. We are truly glad you have answered God's call upon your life, and have found your way to our country. We welcome you. It is our earnest prayer that your ministry here will be both long lasting and immensely blessed of God, and that you and your family will be happy as you minister among and alongside us.

We have had the privilege to be around many U.S. missionaries over the years. They undoubtedly have a real zeal, energy and an enthusiasm that is unmatched by few other cultures. However the realities are that the mission field of the UK is too often a graveyard for missionary endeavour. Please remember you are living in 21st century Britain, not Victorian England. Our land is no longer influenced by Wesley, Knox or Spurgeon, but by Darwin, Dawkins and Hawking. The culture, although diverse, can suck the very marrow from one's bones and drain away that admirable zeal, energy and enthusiasm. Though missionaries have read (hopefully) the biographies and stories of great men and women who laboured long with little results, they often fail to imitate them. Patience in sowing and watering, and longsuffering toward people is absolutely critical. But unrealistic expectations, pressure from the home-base and lack of sanctification often lead to frustration, depression, inertia and interpersonal conflict thwarting the ministry of the Spirit of God.

There are great pitfalls that can be avoided, and just maybe, if you know some of them it will help you to do a better work for the Lord. To that end this work, the effort of both long serving American missionaries and experienced British pastors, is a response to the requests by incoming missionaries for cultural advice, and we hope it helps you avoid some of the struggles and difficulties into which many good men have fallen, whilst trying to establish New Testament churches here.

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Some of the collective thought gathered in this publication might appear at first glance to be quite critical, but please rest assured our goal is to be as constructive and honest as possible. None of the contents of this booklet are intended to hurt or harm anyone.

Many missionaries come to Britain having minimal experience working with people. They may have had some Bible college extension experience and preached some deputation sermons, but too often missionaries are getting their feet wet in a culture and with a people who, whilst bearing some cultural resemblance, are almost completely different to themselves and the people they left behind. One missionary even after many years of service commented, "Many times I don't understand what the Lord is doing." Maybe it is not what "the Lord is doing" but what the missionary is doing, or indeed not doing, that is the problem.

Many missionaries think that after raising support and saying good-bye that the hard work is done and they can now settle into life in the romantic land that they had imagined before they came. But the failure to make decisions and think long-term ends up shortcutting their stay and effectiveness. Practically, their view of their call as dependent upon their experience has slain many otherwise good and well-meaning people to the large ash heap of life-time missionaries who became short-term missionaries.

This world-wide casualty rate seems never to be addressed in missionaries' preparation. The emphasis in preaching and challenge to mission is overly weighted toward the going, and not toward the staying. We are glad you have come, but above all we want you to stay.

As you turn the pages of this booklet you will read notes drawn from the various experiences and observations of American and British men alike. There is no hidden agenda. You should take these words as the godly counsel of friends and brethren, and it is our prayer that in so doing you will not only save yourself and family from unnecessary and often self-inflicted heartache, but those you will minister to also.

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The Good Missionary in God's Word

“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.

If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained. But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness. For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance. For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe.

These things command and teach. Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all. Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.” (1Timothy 4:1-16)

In verses 1-5 of this passage Paul warned Timothy about the rise and a danger of apostates and apostasy. Then he highlighted the characteristics of a good minister. It would serve any missionary well to meditate upon these thoughts and to assure himself that he is right in this regard ever before he pursues his ministry.

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The Good Missionary Must Be Prepared to Expose Error - vs 6a

Paul says, "If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ. . ." What things is he referring to? To the exposure of apostasy as laid out in verses 1-5. Modern Britain is certainly an apostate nation; the fact that you are here, in a land that was once renowned for sending OUT missionaries is proof enough of that. We are living in what is now described as a post-Christian era, and a 'pluralist' society in which all religions share parity, and truth is a relative notion. A missionary stepping into our society must be willing to speak the truth, to tell the whole counsel of God whether it makes him friends or enemies.

However, that said, he is not just to rail and rant against the false, but he is to carefully point out error - that is what the word translated "remembrance" (Gk. *hupotithemi*) means – "to point out". It doesn't mean one must be unkind or hateful, but rather the missionary is to carefully, graciously and lovingly remind or teach those under his charge that certain beliefs and practices are held in error.

The word is in the present tense, indicating that this is not just something he does occasionally, but rather it is something he does continuously. He is to constantly warn people of doctrinal dangers and flag up threats to their spiritual lives.

The Greek word, "*hupotithemi*", paints a wonderful word picture for us to show you how the minister is to do this. The word literally means "to place under" and it pictures stepping stones being placed under the feet so as to accommodate someone travelling over treacherous ground. Certainly many in the UK today are traversing such ground.

How the missionary is to lay these stones is answered in the latter part of verse 6.

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The Good Missionary Must Expound The Truth - vs 6b

"...nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained." The missionary mustn't just harp on about what is wrong in Britain, society or even the churches, but to particularly lay weight upon what is true of God and His Word. Truth is the best corrector of falsehood. If one knows the real thing well, one will spot the bogus thing quickly. Sound doctrine forms the stepping-stones that lead through the swamps of falsehood and unbelief.

But, he doesn't only expound the truth, he also experiences the truth. This was certainly true in Timothy's case he not only *"nourished up [believers] in the words of faith and of good doctrine,"* but he had *"attained,"* unto those words and doctrine. He had literally "followed after" his doctrine. So the missionary must be careful practice what he preaches.

The Good Missionary Emphasises the Eternal - vs 7-9

The Greek world in which Timothy would minister was a world, much like ours, which laid great emphasis upon physical fitness and well-being. In fact the word translated "exercise" is the Greek, "gumnazo" from which we get the words "gymnasium" and "gymnastics." Here Paul uses the worldly emphasis upon the physical body as a springboard whereby he may lay spiritual emphasis upon those things that are eternal. But before he does so he labels false teaching, and ideology as "profane and old wives' fables."

The term "old wives fables" is one that we still use today when we speak of old wives tales, and of course old wives tales are usually superstitious remedies and silly legends that have been passed down the generations. But the term comes out of Greek culture, where women were not usually allowed educational opportunity, it became a designation of ignorance. This was how Paul viewed false teachers, later he would describe them as "proud, knowing nothing, but dotting about questions and strifes of words." You will find plenty of such people in Britain, and will undoubtedly be shocked at the lack of Scriptural knowledge even among professing Christians.

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In Bible times there were those who placed weight upon physical disciplines such as celibacy and fasting, believing they had eternal merit, but just like a gymnast, these disciplines serve only a limited good, hence Paul states, *"exercise thyself rather unto godliness"*, and follows that with the undeniable saying; *"For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."* (1Timothy 4:8).

He is not saying there is no worth in bodily exercise, but that there is limited worth in bodily exercise. However, exercising oneself in godliness, not only produces benefits in this life, but also for the life to come. To underline that fact he adds, *"This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation."* (1 Timothy 4:9).

The missionary sets his life and ministry against the backdrop of eternal things. Eternity matters to him, and so he conveys the eternal to his hearers also.

The Good Missionary Exhausts His Energies - vs 10

Many people perceive ministers in general, and missionaries in particular, as people with too much time on their hands.

Because it is accepted that godliness serves a man here and now, as well as in the hereafter, Paul now says, "Therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe." (1Timothy 4:10). The word "labour" is a translation of the Greek word "kopiao," which means, "to work to the point of weariness or exhaustion."

The truth is that church planting or church rescue involves hard work, and the good missionary puts in time and effort to ensure that people under his care are evangelised, disciplined, fed and equipped to serve the Lord.

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However, the missionary doesn't work as a man pleaser. He should not labour just so as to please his supporting churches, mission board, or even those British people whom God may have graciously given him to serve. He is not their employee, but God's servant.

Notice that in spite of his labours he also "suffers reproach" - that is he is sometimes denounced, and often has his message cast in his teeth. Yet, if he is a true missionary he continues faithful because his trust "is in the living God." He is not serving for man's acclaim. He is not serving for the money. He is not serving self. He is serving the living God - the God who knows and sees, and who will reward accordingly. Remember to minister to those who are in front of you, for the glory of God and not merely those who are behind you. The pressure of supporting churches with THEIR convictions and causes should not be allowed to temper your ministry in the UK.

The Good Missionary Exhorts With Authority - vs 11.

He must be careful about falling into the "pastoral authority" trap. A pastor has no authority beyond the parameters the Scriptures allow Him. The question of authority rests upon the preacher's convictions concerning the Bible as God's Word. If he believes wholeheartedly in verbal plenary inspiration, that the Bible is our only rule of faith and practice, then this should reflect in his ministry. The Bible is God's Word, and it is that conviction which enables a missionary to proclaim its message with power and authority. But it must be GOD'S message, not the missionaries personal preferences, or indeed the sub-cultural pressures of his church circle. Everything must be tested against the unquestionable standard of God's clear Word, and only then commanded and taught as absolute truth.

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The Good Missionary Exemplifies the Faith - verse 12

To offset his inexperience Timothy was exhorted to “Be . . . an example of the believers.”

From what follows we see his example was to be set forth in six areas of personal character and conduct.

He is to be an example in his CONVERSATION - in Word.

How vitally important that the missionary is honest in all he says both in public and in private conversation, not engaging in deliberate lying, slander, malicious gossip, exaggeration or any such thing. His speech, including his sermons, should be, “*alway with grace, seasoned with salt,*” knowing how he “*ought to answer every man.*” (Colossians 4:6). There is never any excuse for belligerent language coming from the mouth of God’s servants.

Sometimes missionaries report a church wide effort as all their own work, e.g., “we distributed 20 000 tracts”, when in fact you distributed 2000 and the rest the combined efforts of the church family. Be honest when reporting from the mission field. Do not claim credit for something you did not do. One missionary reported that he had “started a Bible school” when in fact, the school was the brainchild of local national pastors by whom the missionary was invited to contribute and teach. Think what those pastors felt when they read a mission magazine claiming this school as the work of that mission agency. This hurts your integrity. More importantly it hurts the Spirit of God. Be honest.

Be careful also about what you say on the Internet. Social networking sites, such as Facebook, have an audience on both sides of the Atlantic – do not criticise British people in a public forum (e.g. “these people don’t know how to drive”) – also beware of using their full names on prayer letters as some supporting churches publish missionary letters on their websites, and there is opportunity for offence.

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He is to be an example in his CONDUCT - in Conversation.

The word “conversation” in the Authorised Version normally refers to one’s manner of life, or behaviour. The missionary is, as far as is possible, to be a model of righteousness. What weight will his message hold if his lifestyle contradicts it? He must live out his convictions. *“Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom.”* (James 3:13).

He is to be an example in his COMPASSION - in Love.

Biblical love is very different from worldly love. Worldly love is self-seeking, but Biblical love is self-sacrificial, it is constantly giving out of regard for the need of others. Sadly, many missionaries have come to our country in the past thinking to make a name for themselves and their ministry. Remember that Jesus taught, *“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”* (John 15:13). It has been well said that people will not care how much you know, until they know how much you care.

He is to be an example in his COMPOSURE - in Spirit.

The word “spirit” here means “the disposition or influence which fills and governs the soul of any one.” In other words he was to be a man who should govern his own soul, a man who was control of his feelings - not given to excesses of the spirit, such as angry outbursts, great bouts of spiritual depression, or breakdown, but constantly disciplining himself and always retaining his composure, whatever the provocation or circumstance.

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He is to be an example in his COMMITMENT - in Faith.

Paul was not talking about “the faith” as in the trust of the gospel, but faith as in faithfulness. The missionary is to be a man of unswerving commitment, consistently faithful. His loyalty to his call must be beyond question. He is in it for the long haul.

He is to be an example in his CLEANLINESS - in Purity.

The Gk. word is “hagneia” and primarily refers to the matter of sexual purity, both in terms of outward action and inward intent. In the qualifications of the bishop, Paul prescribed that he be, “the husband of one wife,” literally, “a one-woman man”, and this total commitment to marital fidelity is here reiterated. It is all too common in these days of sexual permissiveness to hear of ministers failing in this area, but it should come as no surprise that this is an area of particular temptation for them given that Satan knows full well the qualifications of a pastor and the wholesale damage that is done to the ministry when a pastor or missionary succumbs to sexual temptation.

Missionaries coming from North America are surprised and caught off guard by the easier access to pornography that is available in Europe. This is everywhere from television, to billboards, magazines, and even in daily newspapers. Not aware of this, they are often tempted in areas they have never had to face before. Some are ensnared. Knowledge of this fact ahead of time should lead you to greater vigilance.

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The Good Missionary Preacher Enjoins Believers - verse 13

Here Timothy is exhorted to give attendance or to pay attention to three areas of his ministry.

Reading - that is public reading of the Word of God. Secondly he is to exhort those who hear the reading of the Scriptures to obey. But it is the third element that is vitally important for new missionaries - He is to attend to doctrine. The issues and arguments of the churches in America ARE the issues and arguments in America, NOT HERE. What some particular school may do, or believe, or teach has no relevance here. Do not make things that are not an issue. None of the preachers or fellowships, which you may have followed there, has any importance here. We have our own issues, and of primary concern doctrinally is the issue of Reformed Theology. You need to know what Reformed Theology is and how to debate it. You should also thoroughly understand the many off shoots of this theological system, such as Sabbath day observance, and hyper-Calvinism.

The Good Missionary Exercises His Gifts - verse 14.

“Neglect not . . .” the word is “ameleo” and it means make to light of, thus Paul is exhorting the younger man not to make light of, or to disregard his responsibilities as a minister and preacher of the gospel.

To encourage him to stay true to his call, the apostle gave him three great motives;

He reminded him of his spiritual gifts - “Neglect not the gift that is in thee . . .” It is a reference to his salvation and with it the accompanying spiritual gifts given to him by God. Timothy must have had a number of gifts including evangelism, preaching, teaching & leadership, which are evident throughout the two epistles bearing his name by Paul’s constant reference to them. You too have gifts God has given you to be utilised among the British people, know what they are, and how best to exercise them. Understand both your strengths and weaknesses.

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He reminded him that others had publicly declared his gifts - “Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy . . .” That is, there was a public affirmation of his gift by Divine revelation - of course prophecy has ceased as a gift in the church today, being one of the sign gifts operational during the period in which the New Testament was being written. Today God uses His Word, His Spirit, & providence to lead men into ministry. Be sure of your call. Make sure that this is where God wants you. Only leave when Gods says GO, not when times are tough or the circumstances are against you. Come with a long-term plan in mind; nothing here happens quickly.

He reminded him that the church and her elders had confirmed his gifts - “with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.” (1Timothy 4:14). We could say that Timothy’s gifts, which led to his pastoral call, were confirmed *subjectively* by inner conviction of his own spirit, *objectively* by prophetic declaration, and *collectively* by public confirmation and the laying on of hands. For Timothy to neglect or abandon his gifts would be a travesty and so Paul reminds him of them and assures him he has what it takes to finish the task God has called him to.

The Good Missionary is Engrossed in His Work - verse 15

To paraphrase this verse, Paul was saying, *“Practice and cultivate these duties, and throw yourself wholly into them.”* “Give the ministry your all.” The life of a God called missionary is taken up by what he does. He doesn’t minister for a living, he is living to minister - missions is his Divinely appointed life purpose, and he should be engrossed in it! Why? *“That thy profiting (or advancement) may appear to all.”* (1Timothy 4:15). Missionaries have to grow in grace too! Paul’s own testimony was, *“Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”* (Philippians 3:12-14).

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A good missionary seeks to advance in Christ likeness, and his congregation should be able, over the course of time, see him grow.

The Good Missionary Examines Himself His Doctrine - vs 16.

As we peruse 1Timothy 4 we see that every quality and ever characteristic relevant to the Christian ministry falls under the heading of one of two categories. Either the minister was to apply something to himself personally, or to his ministry. So a missionary is to be constantly bringing his life and work under scrutiny. In so doing he saves himself and those who are under his charge. By constantly reviewing his own walk with God, what he is teaching, and how he conducts himself, the missionary saves himself from the charge of hypocrisy, because he practices what he preaches, is careful in all he says and does, cannot be accused or reproached for his behaviour, his faithfulness, the way he composes himself, the nature of his relationship with the opposite sex etc. That being the case, we ask you to give your prayerful consideration to the counsel of the following pages.

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The Good Missionary and His Family

Finding a home:

It stands to reason that one of your primary considerations when you arrive in a new place is where to live. Under the present UK immigration system an incoming missionary who is church sponsored will have to live near the vicinity in which his sponsoring church is ministering. In choosing a house and a community for your family, understand that not all communities are good and not all are safe. Make all necessary enquires before you sign anything. Do not take the word of estate agents (realtors) who are keen to make a sale. Ask trusted people from your sponsoring church, other pastors, or even people you might meet from day to day in the community.

When looking at a particular house it pays to visit the neighbourhood at rush hour to see how the traffic is in the early hours of the morning. Also visit when local schools close for the day, and between 10pm and midnight, as well as on weekends. Take note of the pedestrians in the neighbourhood in order to get an idea of its ethnicity. Most American missionary families, except God called them there, would likely find it uncomfortable to live in communities that were dominated by Asian or Middle Eastern Muslims.

Bear in mind when buying or renting a home there are some extra costs that every household incurs, such as Council Tax (up to £150 per month), water charges (approx £30 per month), T.V. Licence (yes, you need a licence to own a television in the UK - £145.50 per year)

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Personal Appearance:

Dress in European styles of clothing as much as you can. Some items of clothing make a missionary alien to those around him. This is a subtle thing, but it is true. When at church many American missionaries are known to dress their boys in two-piece suits and ties. Generally speaking British children do not wear suits and ties (except to weddings). Let your kids dress in smart casual clothes for church. British women do not wear denim skirts with ankle socks and trainers, such attire belongs to an Independent Baptist sub-cultural identity, and sets the missionary wife apart from those to whom she and her husband are trying to minister.

Missionaries should bear in mind that in this culture you can look too polished. This applies both in the pulpit and when engaging in public evangelism. At one meeting a preacher was described as looking too polished, too slick, like a stereotypical second hand car salesman. Such a fellow is off to a bad start, as people will be wary of him and feel he is not to be trusted. The dark suited “dress to impress” attire much beloved of some preachers in America, is considered “dress to excess” in Britain and gives the idea of someone who is possessed with self and untrustworthy. Women too must be careful not to appear over glamorous or wear too much make up. This is not to say a woman may not look nice, or wear some make-up, but she must do so modestly. Modesty is not merely a matter of covering up, but of not doing anything that hurts or distracts from the gospel message. One unfortunate woman was described as, “having enough paint to coat a warship, and enough powder to sink it!”

When engaging in public evangelism, door-to-door, or open air it is advisable to dress “smart casual”. The Holy Spirit can convict men of sin even if we don’t wear a tie! A missionary who appears uninvited on the doorstep wearing a suit and tie screams “Jehovah’s Witness” and is asking for doors to be slammed in his face. Biblical separation in this culture some times means not dressing like a cultist.

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Relationships:

Within your own family

It is, of course, vitally important that the missionary takes good care of his wife and family. If you do a great work and lose your wife in the process, you have no ministry. Most men begin the missionary life having an office or study in the home. It is a wise man that learns to demarcate this area as workspace, and not count it as part of his family home. The office is not home space, even when it is in the home. A man who is locked up in his office, believing that his presence in the house is sufficient to justify being with his family is making a great mistake, and is creating little resentments that may grow into great hurts. Take time for your wife and children.

That said, make sure the ministry has you attention also, The UK is a nation where, even yet, the influence of the “Protestant work ethic” is still felt. A missionary who is taking his wife shopping on Monday, at the zoo with the kids Tuesday, playing in the park Wednesday and on the Golf Course Friday is certain to lose respect among those to whom he has come to minister. The good missionary should be able to look people in the eye knowing that he has put as much time and effort, and maybe more, into his vocation as they have in their daily work.

Be very careful too of your conduct with your children. Whilst UK law permits the reasonable use of physical discipline of one’s own children, many people will certainly frown upon a very forceful spanking. Also British children are “smacked” when they do something wrong, never “whipped”. It is advisable only to discipline your children in the privacy of you home. Do not make an example of them before church members or others. Be careful about harsh words in public too lest you create a bad testimony.

In British churches shows of affection between a husband and wife often make people uncomfortable. British Christians believe that a couple’s whole attention should be given to the things of God

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during worship times. You should probably avoid putting your arm around your wife in church, as well as kissing her, especially during a service. It is acceptable to hold hands.

Many missionaries continue to observe US public holidays. Such a practice might hinder your assimilation with the culture here. We are not advising you do not do it, but that you are wise about it. It is not uncommon to be invited by fellow missionaries to July 4th celebrations. Rarely are British nationals invited to such events, and to be honest few would really desire to be involved in one this side of the Atlantic. Such gatherings may serve to create a cultural wedge between the missionary and those to whom he wishes to minister.

Start driving lessons as soon as you are settled and have your own car. You have one year to drive legally with your USA and International licenses. More important is that the entire mindset and philosophy of driving in the UK is different. There is so much to learn, so do not leave it to the last minute and expect to breeze through a driving test. Lessons are expensive, but the tests are difficult and expensive also if you fail repeatedly.

Within the Christian community

Too many missionaries are sectarian in their view of other believers working in the country. They take upon themselves an arrogant spirit toward other workers and ministries. This is eventually noticed by the nationals. They will at first express confusion over this. Sometimes this leads national believers either adopt that same spirit, or to look for more loving spirits elsewhere.

If possible, spend at least the first year working with or close to an existing Church or fellowship. The more British it is, the better your learning experience will be. Try to avoid fellowshipping with only missionary led Independent Baptist Fellowships or Churches. If you work in a missionary church here that is just a little “American island”, it will not prepare you to work toward establishing an

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indigenous church. By the way, be sure to know what that word “indigenous” means. Please know what the definition is and what actually constitutes an Independent Baptist Church.

Don't assume no one knows or preaches the Gospel until you have visited and questioned. Do proper survey work before you commit to a town or community, as there are far too many places with no Gospel witness for you to set up in the shadow of someone who does. Don't assume no one in this country has ever really understood the Gospel of Christ until you arrived on these shores.

When you begin: Learn all you can from British Christians, in and outside the church with which you work. Be a good neighbour with those gospel-preaching churches who will allow you to. (This does not mean you have to believe all they believe). Visit their services (again, do not make the mistake of only visiting Missionary led Independent Baptist Churches).

Glean what you can from their services, ignoring those things you might find objectionable, (such as the music, women reading from the platform, or Bible version). Your goal is not to find fault but to see which practices you may adopt in good conscience. In every church you visit you should take note of:

- How the announcements (UK churches call them “notices”) are made.
- How the song service is conducted.
- How the offering is received.
- How you were greeted when you arrived, and treated inside the church.
- Pay attention to the pre and prior service behaviour of the congregation.
- Make a note how promotional giveaways are presented.

Unless there is some clear Scriptural reason why you should not, try to incorporate as many of these characteristics of worship and service in your new church when it starts.

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Get to know local Pastors if possible. Some of these men may prove to be good friends, and willing to help you where they can.

In some parts of the UK there are certain religious sensitivities, which should be noted and even respected. In parts of Scotland and Northern Ireland you may find yourself ministering in areas that are Sabbatarian. In some of the Scottish islands they padlock the children's play ground on Sundays because "Sunday is not a Funday". Neither can you ride a bike; pick flowers and on and on it goes. Such neighbourhoods look dimly upon the pastor or missionary who shops on Sundays or who performs any work around his home, such as mowing the grass. Some missionaries have had to learn the hard way that Sabbatarian communities will frown upon a church that does anything on a Sunday besides worship and/or evangelism, so church barbecues, picnics, family fun days etc., are out on Sundays in such communities. You may, of course, argue your liberty in Christ and your freedom from such legalistic behaviours, but you will find your family and ministry is targeted by church people for criticism and your effectiveness to witness in that community hindered.

In Northern Ireland and parts of Scotland, many churches wear the "head covering", i.e., ladies wear hats to church. This is often a test of orthodoxy. Although you need not implement such a tradition in the church you start, it would be wise, and gracious, to observe this practice when visiting other churches in those regions of our country that do.

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Within the General Community

It is strongly advised that you give prayerful consideration to placing your children in a local Primary School if they are of that age (4-11yrs). This will help you and your family in a number of ways. It will help your children to assimilate into the society and even adopt the accent, thus enabling them to avoid bullying or ostracisation. It will help them learn the culture. It also frees you and your wife for ministry, and creates contacts within the community. It may afford you opportunity to minister in the school, taking part in assemblies, or can occasionally open up doors for other ministries.

It is important to get involved in the Community in which you live. It is good for local people to see you and your wife caring and involved in their community. Some examples are:

- Charitable enterprises
- Community Choirs
- Children's play groups
- Gym memberships
- Voluntary assistance in the community
- Parent Teachers Associations
- School Governorships
- Brownies/Scouts for children
- Resident's Associations
- Adult Education
- Classroom assistance

If everything you do is only something that will benefit you (your Church), people will see and understand your motivation as self-interest. People are not stupid.

Too many missionaries fail to learn the news, current affairs, sports and general goings on in the country they now live in. Their ignorance is not seen as spirituality, but just plain ignorance. Though they often disdain the affairs of their adopted country, they are equally quite up-to-date on the news, politics and sports results

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of the country they left behind. This not only is a bad testimony, it eventually hurts the missionaries own settling in process. Often, such men do not stay for the long run.

In Britain “FOX News” might be considered a wildlife programme. Watch it if you must, but also watch BBC News, ITV, SKY News, Channel 4 News or FIVE News (at times you will object to how certain news items are presented, and the often anti-Christian bias, particularly by the BBC, but you will grasp something of what’s happening in the nation, and better understand where people are coming from when you speak with them). Read newspapers, both local and national, many of them are free online. It is appalling to see that so many missionaries know nothing except for outdated stereotypes of the country they have come to live in. In this information age we live in, it is quite easy to gather up-to-date information on almost any place in the world. It is an insult to the British people to hear basic mistakes made by the missionaries. Many missionaries are more familiar with what is happening 4000 miles away than what is happening around the corner! Know the politics of the country. The average British person will have a fair understanding of US affairs, particularly foreign policy, it is only right therefore, especially if you live here, that you show an interest in UK affairs. By no means meddle in political affairs, but be able to talk knowledgeably with people about the events in Parliament or decisions taken by your local council.

Also be cautious about criticising the National Health Service. The NHS is a sacred cow in this country. Everyone knows it has its faults, and you will often hear British people complaining about it, BUT at the same time they value it as a national institution and do not take kindly to foreigners criticising it. The same is true of the Royal Family. The American comedian Jerry Seinfeld discovered this when asked about the upcoming wedding of Prince William to Kate Middleton. He said, sarcastically, “Yes, I’m very excited. Well it’s a circus act, it’s an absurd act. You know, it’s a dress-up. It’s a classic English thing of let’s play dress-up. Let’s pretend that these are special people. OK, we’ll all pretend that – that’s what theatre is,

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that's why the British have the greatest theatre in the world. They love to dress up and they love to play pretend." There was uproar. Like the NHS, the British Royal family is not without its critics at home, but many people resent foreigners criticising it. One newspaper correspondent from West Sussex summed it up well when she wrote, "I couldn't care less about the 'royal wedding' and I am no fan of the royal family or the social climbing Middleton clan, but I must admit that I still object to an American saying things like this." There you have it. It's OK for Brits to criticise themselves, but be careful about joining in.

Know the history, both local and national. You don't need to know every King and Queen of England in order from time immemorial, but you should have a reasonable grasp of history from World War II years onward. Become familiar with the names of recent past Prime Ministers. Discover local history also. Many older people will be happy to fill you in on developments in their city or community over the years. Know the industrial history; that they built ships in Glasgow, Liverpool and Belfast, that Sheffield is famous for its steelworks, Stoke-on-Trent for Pottery, the Rhonda Valley for coal mining etc.

Britain is sports mad. In particular people love their football, and it's not often called "soccer" here. Please do not try to convince people that it should be, football of every kind began its history in England, so please respect that. Whilst no one will begrudge your enjoyment of American football, or other North American sports, by and large they will know little about them, and, generally speaking, have little wish to. Become familiar with local football teams and British sports (football, cricket, International rugby and golf). If you learn to love such sports, which are a large part of this culture, people will gladly include you in their conversations and friendly rivalry.

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Of vital importance in any country is obedience to the law. The missionary has no immunity from the laws of the land. He may not like the laws or taxes he is required to pay, but it is never right to do wrong. Once he is aware of the legal requirements it is his duty to comply quickly and openly. American missionaries are required, under UK law, to register for taxation in this country. You should do this at the earliest possible opportunity, and seek the advice of a good (preferably Christian) accountant. Let no one tell you that because you are registered for tax in the US you have no responsibility here. That is simply untrue. If handled properly your tax burden here will be very light, but be under no illusions missionaries who have neglected this area in the past have created major problems for themselves, and some have been forced off the field. Should you ignore this advice you not only jeopardise your own ministry in this country, but may also penalise the local church that have sponsored you.

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The Good Missionary and His Church

You have come a long way, left behind family, friends and church fellowship to start a church. Thousands of dollars, all of it God's money, has been invested in your family and ministry, so having arrived here, it is important that you get off to the best start.

Church Rescue

Hopefully you have had and used the opportunity to meet British Christians, visited their churches, and noted cultural differences. It may be that an opportunity opens up to engage in church rescue, where a dwindling congregation asks you to come as pastor. Church rescue may prove immensely helpful to developing a sound and growing Bible believing church. It provides the missionary with an instant congregation, albeit a small one, but bearing in mind that a church plant must start with no one this is an advantage. Even a small group of people will have many connections within the community, and may introduce you to others in the neighbourhood. It will likely come with its own building, although the building may be old and in need of a great deal of repair. Still, it's a building, and it has sat in a certain locality for some time being recognised as a "church" by the community. So, church rescue gives you roots. Not only does it provide you with some people and a building, but also it comes with a history. People will have been married in and buried from that church. They will have visited it at Easter or Christmas; they may have gone to Sunday School there many years ago. In the UK history counts. New churches are often viewed with suspicion and people are often fearful to commit to them worrying that the American pastor and new congregation meeting in a hotel room is not really a "proper" church, and likely to disappear anytime soon.

For the missionary having people, building and history is good news and affords him bags of potential. However, one word of caution; such churches will come with their own problems. The people who are already there may resist real change. They may like things done

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their way. This may not necessarily be a bad thing, but you might have to work with years of tradition. They may hold aspects of the property as untouchable, so that even the movement of items of furniture could cause offence. Be sure you have done your homework. That you have confidence in the willingness and the spirit of the people you are working with. At the beginning tread cautiously and slowly, unless prompted by the people do not change too much, too soon. That said, certainly, church rescue is often preferable over fresh church planting.

Church Planting – As You Begin

However, supposing the Lord is leading you to initiate a new church altogether. You should to have done your homework by now, and thoroughly surveyed the area, identifying a needy community, not encroaching upon another gospel preaching ministry. It is suggested that you start with a small group Bible study, rather than attempting a “Grand Opening” of a “church”. Such openings are rarely “grand” and you, your wife and children, a sign and a box of printed invitations do not constitute a “church”. Be careful not to discredit yourself before you begin. The local church is an organism, not just an organisation, and all organisms begin in embryo. Start small. A small group Bible study that gets to know people is going to have a greater impact on the long run than a formal “church” gathering where only a handful attend. Discipling and mentoring a few, one-on-one at the outset, is far better than “pastoring” or preaching to a few from behind pulpit in a formal setting. Pour yourself into people on a personal level. That’s what Jesus did.

To attract people to this group there are a number of things you can do. If you have been working with a local church, ask the leadership there to help you in your new work by their counsel and having people sit in on your meetings. (Please do not make this an opportunity to disrespect the Pastor and people of the sponsoring church by ‘sheep stealing’). This will make your church a “satellite” of the established church and give you an identity with another local group rather than a mission or church body thousands of

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miles away. Capitalise upon the contacts you have made with people in the community, at the school gates, in charitable work, residents groups etc., and then also use leaflets to highlight the meetings. As soon as is reasonably possible move the meeting out of your home into the home of one of those attending. Let the group grow. Allow interaction; let people ask questions, not only about the Scriptures and spiritual matters, but also about you and your family. On that point it might be better to refer to yourself as an “evangelist” rather than a missionary. Many British people view missionaries as working only among third world or tribal peoples. They will be interested to know how you are supported, they will want to assess your commitment, and they will be curious about your background. They are actually determining whether or not they want to commit to you as a leader and as a person.

Let the church develop at its own pace. Ideally, the idea of constituting as a church will come from the people themselves. When they are ready they might suggest meeting on Sundays, as well as weeknights. Again, speak with the leadership of the sponsoring church and see how you can utilise their membership to support a Sunday ministry.

When the time has arrived to constitute involve the people in drawing up the constitution. Do not show up and present them with the constitution of your home church expecting them to give loyalty to it. This is THEIR church. If they have a meaningful say in formulating the constitution they are more likely to respect it. When the church formally constitutes it is time to break with the mother church and no longer look for her members to be supportive in weekly meetings.

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Children's Meetings

British people appreciate anyone who takes a genuine interest in their children. A "Good News Club" or "Holiday Bible Club" (VBS) may provide the opportunity to build a Sunday School whilst creating contacts with parents. Please be aware that BEFORE you begin working with children the CRIMINAL RECORDS BUREAU must check you out. This is the law. To do this you will need the help of an umbrella organisation, such as Churches Child Protection Advisory Service. If you are associated with a local church they may be able to submit the necessary paperwork on your behalf. This needs to be done for every adult who is involved in your ministry with children or vulnerable adults, so it also applies to crèche (nursery) workers, and Sunday School teachers, unless they are teaching or minding their own children. It is good practice to place a small print statement on your promotional literature for children's ministries highlighting that all workers are CRB checked.

In the UK there are many activities vying for a child's time on Sundays. Sunday is a family day. In non-Christian homes mornings are spent enjoying a restful lie-in, or at some activity such as "Dads and Lads Football." The day is also the biggest shopping day of the week! So, if you are having a children's meeting on Sunday it is advisable to have it mid afternoon (around 3 pm), and not early in the morning,

Choose your fellowship/church name carefully.

Most British churches identify themselves with a community rather than a Biblical name, e.g., Leek Baptist Church, Woodhill Baptist Church, Milton Baptist Church etc.

Bible names, if chosen, are usually simple such as "Grace, Bethel, Emmanuel, Calvary, Bethany, Bethesda or Trinity." (Note: Sovereign Grace churches are always Reformed and very Calvinistic, this is occasionally read into the name Grace Baptist Church).

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Avoid names such as “Gloryland, Victory, Berea (or Berean, usually misheard by British citizens as “Brain”), Liberty, Lifegate, Lighthouse, Friendship, Macedonia, Hope, Cornerstone, or Maranatha,” which are considered overtly American. Do not call your church “First Baptist” particularly if you are not, and if you are, it’s likely you will be the only Baptist Church in that community anyway.

Terms such as “fundamental” may be understood within US culture, but are misunderstood in the UK as “extreme” or “dangerous”. Never describe your church as “militant.”

Church Planting – After You Begin

Things that may not work:

- 9:45 am Sunday School.
- Asking people to read or pray aloud.
- Having people shake hands mid service, or worse, hold hands during Lord’s Supper.
- A regular evening service when you first begin.
- Observing the Lord’s Table once a quarter or once a year.
- Asking for raised hands, and having long invitations to come forward.
- Publicly identifying visitors (a general welcome is preferable to having a new person stand or being pinpointed in their seat).
 - One missionary/pastor had his church sing a “welcome song” to visitors, which was excruciating for both visitor and congregation alike!

Long drawn out invitations, making people “walk the aisle”, raise their hands and general public displays are very difficult for the British mindset.

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This does not mean that invitations are done away with; but be prepared to let people come to Christ where they sit or stand, with the opportunity to share with the one they came with, or in private with the Pastor afterwards if they are more comfortable. Why give an invitation when the numbers are so small that you know who the visitors are, and you know who is likely to be saved or unsaved in any case? It is better to speak with people in private, and in person, but do not be too forceful. Paul testified to the Thessalonians, *“we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children.”* (1Thess 2:7)

Beware of easy prayerism. Many shallow professions are made this way. British people have usually little basis for believing the gospel. In spite of our rich spiritual history, most people today are Biblically illiterate. They need to be given the foundations for belief. When a missionary boasts that he has “led several people to Christ each week”, but his church is “we four and no more” there is clearly a problem in his method of “evangelism”. He is winning converts, but not to Christ. Such a fellow needs to understand that salvation does not rest upon a man, “saying a prayer”, but upon him being lovingly and carefully persuaded to trust Christ so that Holy Spirit conviction dawns on his soul. Men and women in this society will often need to be reasoned with for some time before they truly convert. Paul, *“reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks,”* (Acts 18:4) and so must we. We understand that there is often pressure from supporting churches to report numbers, but our advice is to minister to those who are in front of you, not those who are behind you.

If possible and available, find a trusted British Christian elder from whom you can seek advice and run your inspirational ideas by him. He will view matters as you may never see them in a lifetime here.

Be careful about self-promotion, rather than ministry promotion – people do not need to see your photo on every item related to your church.

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At the outset it may fall upon the missionary personally to purchase many of the items used by the new fellowship. There are two dangers in this. Firstly, the church may assume that things belong to them that don't. If an item used by the church (e.g. photocopier) is the personal property of the missionary, and he intends to take it with him wherever he goes, then the church should be encouraged to buy its own as soon as possible, or at least informed that the one they are using is not actually theirs.

Some missionaries make the mistake of "bussing" people to meetings. This means your church can grow no bigger than your bus. People make their own way to school, work, and recreation, they should be encouraged to make their own way to church, unless they are physically disabled. The other problem here is when the missionary leaves he takes his "bus" with him, and the church instantly loses its membership.

The second danger arises when the mission agency, missionary pastor or supporting churches buy or contribute to a building for the church to meet in. What happens when the missionary leaves? It has been the sad experience of churches here to lose their buildings! In one particular case a mission agency bought a property, and allowed the church to meet there for over 2 decades. When property prices boomed the mission agency laid hold upon the property and evicted the fellowship. However, the national people in the group had committed time and money to that building remodeling, repairing and equipping it. No account was taken of this in the sale of the property. The church was simply put out on to the street, resulting in an unseemly legal wrangle. Needless to say no church exists there now, and that mission agency is viewed with deep mistrust. There needs to be clear lines of demarcation on property, so that no ambiguity exists when the missionary moves on. If an external body has an investment in a church building this needs to be understood, and the church should be encouraged to buy them out as soon as possible if they are seeking a return of their investment. One mission group complained that national pastors just "couldn't do it" when their

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missionaries left. But the missionaries left taking transportation, office equipment, musical instruments, hymnbooks etc., thus seriously handicapping the incoming pastors.

Do not emphasise the KJV on your notice boards or literature. (In fact UK believers more often refer to it as the AV, (Authorised Version), rather than KJV, and never AV1611). By all means you should help people understand the issues surrounding Bible translations, but a gentle spirit in teaching people about Bible versions, will win more people than an authoritative, dictatorial style that demands absolute submission. Most British Christians have never given thought to the Bible version they use. Our advice is to use the AV from the pulpit, highlight the problems with Modern Versions as and when they arise, and leave the rest to God. Remember, we are to glory in the cross, not a Bible translation, and the cross is our primary ground of fellowship. (Gal 6:14).

Use British hymnbooks. Many conservative churches use “Songs of Victory” published by Faith Mission. Only musicians have music editions, the congregation uses a ‘words only’ edition. Observe on your travels what songbooks are being used. Some will use “Mission Praise”, some “Songs of Fellowship” these generally lean toward more modern songs, and are in great use by new evangelical and charismatic type churches. Other common hymnbooks are “Redemption Hymnal”, “Redemption Songs” and “Believers Hymn Book.” Many churches are using projectors for hymns. Please be aware that not all modern hymns are unworthy of our consideration. Hymns, such as, “In Christ Alone”, by Stuart Townend and Keith Getty, are replete with Scriptural truth and much enjoyed by British worshippers. Song services should not abandon English songs and you should be aware also that British Christians may sing the same song, but to a different tune. British Christians have some great songs to teach you, if you let them, (E.g. Touch the Helm of His Garment; ‘Tis Old Yet Ever New). The choosing of an appropriate hymnbook greatly helps.

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Preaching

British people for the most part are thinkers. They are not usually emotionally driven and do not respond well to shallow, gimmicky sermons or crocodile tears.

Also if your going to preach it, you better prove it and it needs to have meat to it. You may have many of your sub-cultural, denominational ideas challenged. Be prepared. Ask yourself, "Is this something I have picked up culturally or is it really Scriptural?" Don't try to conform the church to your "American" ways or dress standards, preach modesty and let the Lord do the rest. Sometimes we pronounce Bible book names differently. For example, English people say, "One Corinthians," rather than "First Corinthians." Habakkuk is pronounced differently, do not heed the advice of one American missionary to another when he counseled him, "You're the pastor, teach them to say it your way." How very crass! You are in Britain, people will tolerate you saying it your way, but they will not tolerate being compelled to speak your way. How much better if you learn to pronounce Bible book names as British Christians do.

It would do men well to get a good handle on Reformed Theology, and to be able to thoroughly defend the pre-millennial faith. Just because someone says they are reformed does not automatically mean they are a hyper-Calvinist. To answer the question of "Are you a Calvinist?" takes a bit of thought. If we answer, "No, I am a Baptist", or "a Biblicist", it makes sense at all. After all some Baptists believe they can lose their salvation, as well as those Baptist who are hyper-Calvinistic. Calvinists consider themselves Biblical in their position. The Bible does talk about election, does talk about predestination AND does talk about whosoever will. Know what you believe and why.

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British congregations, generally speaking, like their preachers behind the pulpit. They do not take kindly to antics on the platform, so no running around, and no climbing on furniture, however good the illustration. Wandering around the platform leaves the congregation wondering where you are going and not listening to what you are saying. Never, ever run around the church meeting room. That practice is not only unbiblical, it is cultural, and in this country will be viewed as attention seeking and distracting from God's Word. Be wary of the constant shouting of "Amen", "C'mon" "Preach it!" and other such like phrases during services. We don't do it. We might mutter it, but we will rarely shout it; certainly we will not do so constantly and are put off by those who do.

Also understand that whilst British people love our country we are not as fiercely patriotic as Americans. Such patriotism here is viewed as "jingoistic" and "xenophobic." Do not encourage patriotism in the same way you would in America. Flags of any description should not be displayed in the church. The only exception to this might be on Remembrance Sunday, when our war dead is remembered, but even then tread with caution. On that Sunday be sure to wear a poppy, otherwise you will cause offence. Otherwise avoid all talk of flags and patriotic emblems. Even the Christian Flag is out of place in a British church. This is an American invention and UK churches would not recognise it.

In every country there are issues. Every country has them and they are more often than not unique to that country alone. Here in lays the problem for many well-intentioned missionaries from the US. Your issue in the States is more than likely a non-issue in the UK. And on the other hand, our issues here in the UK are non-issues in the US. Again we mention the issue of the head covering or of the Sabbath. UK Churches have been swamped with Charismatic theology and ideas, so the issue of cessationism of the gifts is another. People here have never heard of the "Baptist Bride", unless it is introduced to them by a missionary. Similarly they may be unfamiliar with "Ruckmanism" (thankfully) etc. So there is little

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use in preaching and teaching on things that matter in Pensacola, but not Preston. Preach and teach on what matters here.

Pastoral Style

The belief in unquestioning loyalty and obedience to the pastor is never endearing. The demanding of respect for your position will prove difficult, as people will see it for what it is: dictatorship. Respect needs to be earned not demanded. People can be taught to have the right attitude towards the Pastor, and they will, when the Pastor treats them kindly and in a Christ-like spirit.

The saying that an “Englishman’s home is his castle” definitely holds water. English people do not want you to visit them unannounced. (Incidentally, this makes door-to-door work difficult, though not impossible). It is good practice to let people know if you are coming, and to arrange a good time to do so, otherwise don’t be surprised if your welcome is a little frosty. In return, do not think that English people will feel free to drop by your home uninvited. They will not do it as a general rule. They will come if you invite them, but they would feel as though they are intruding otherwise.

Americans as a nationality are stereotypically known for being “loud”. We know that is no more true than the stereotype of all Englishmen wearing bowler hats. Nevertheless, British people do feel embarrassed by unsought public attention, so if you are blessed with a very outgoing personality, loud voice or laugh try to be a little more reserved. Your church members may not appreciate you shouting, “Praying for you brother!” across a busy street. British people are quite private people when it comes to personal matters such as their faith.

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The Good Missionary and His Language

One of the attractions for American missionaries coming to the British Isles is that they don't have to learn the language. Or do they? In truth we are "separated by a common language," North American missionaries often refuse to incorporate the terms and idiomatic expressions of their adopted county. Some never ask questions to learn what things mean or how to sound more like the people they are ministering to. Of course, we would not go as far as espousing the hilarious notion of putting on an accent, (see Dick Van Dyke in *Mary Poppins*) when it begins to happen naturally the missionary should just go with it. Some will fight this.

In preaching, an overuse of American terminology and illustrations is unhelpful. People simply do not relate to illustrations from American sports. Similarly they may not identify with American foods, (e.g., Iced Tea), they will not relate to American political illustrations. That's another reason you should acquaint yourself with British current affairs, history, politics and sports.

Certain words in common usage Stateside are deemed outright vulgar here. The word "bloody" is a curse (not cus) word unless in the context of something bleeding. One missionary railed on women wearing pants to church whilst, "sitting on their fannies doing nothing." Not only was his language coarse, but he had just told the ladies not to wear underwear to church, and rebuked them for sitting on their genitals!!! Men do not wear suspenders (unless they are cross dressers). Suspenders here are garter belts used for holding up ladies hosiery, American "suspenders" are called "braces" and few British men wear them. Randy is never a boy's name that British people would use, but always a reference to male lust. We could go on.

Also beware of making offensive hand gestures; in particular holding up two fingers to the congregation, which is the same as holding up a middle finger in the U.S. If signifying "two" the fingers should be held together with the palm of the hand facing the congregation, never apart whilst showing the back of the hand to the congregation.

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People understand it takes time to learn these things, and they will be forgiving **IF** the missionary is willing to listen when told. It would be wise therefore, to appoint some people, preferably British, who would make you aware of inappropriate or offensive use of language, help you build a UK vocabulary by swapping American terms for English equivalents, and pinpointing illustrations that miss the mark because of cultural boundaries.

Two other points here: People will be turned off you if all they hear is non-stop talking about America and how things are done there. (That is not to say there may be times when your experiences in the US are relevant, but that you must be careful of overkill, or inferring criticism of things British). And secondly be careful about the usage of the term “home.” Most missionaries no matter how long they stay in the country still refer to where they came from as home. This may be a small matter, but sometimes it shows where their heart is to people who thought that this was their home now.

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The Good Missionary and His Departures

The Dangers of Furlough.

As much as the pattern of a four-year furlough cycle is drummed into the missionary, it is often the death knell to a young fledgling ministry. We appreciate that this is an insistence by some supporting churches and mission boards, but increasingly missionaries and their boards are realising that more frequent furlough times with shorter spells spent away are better than being gone for a full year or more. Realistically, what American pastor who is ministering to an established church would dream of leaving his charge for a year? Yet that is the requirement placed upon missionary pastors with fledgling flocks.

Our advice is to come only when you are supported enough to stay in the country. We understand that changes in the economy here or in America affect income, but bear in mind that going back constantly to raise more support will diminish the effectiveness of your ministry. The people will be unsettled and have no confidence in your commitment to them or the work.

The other issue about furlough is, who will fill in. It is not unusual for a missionary to leave and then come back to complain that his substitute had “destroyed my work.” Actually, it is your job to see that your replacement is someone you can completely trust to carry on as before. Short furloughs help minimise such problems, and may even allow lay people in the church to hold the fort for a few weeks of absence, but if you must return for 12-18 months, then it is recommended you begin searching for a replacement from year one. The person who replaces you should be someone you know well enough to entrust with the ministry, not someone you were pointed to 2 months before departure, and who resembles “any port in a storm.” Do the right thing by your church and your ministry.

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The Dangers of Leaving Too Soon

American missionaries are often referred to as, “fly by nights.” That is their unfortunate reputation, and sadly it is supported by the experience of many who have seen their “pastor” leave in a rush to indigenise the work, or because of some difficulty or trouble that arose. For the latter type Jesus had another name. (John 10:12-13).

Far too many, as soon as they can get a group, organise and call themselves a church, are quick to either go back proclaiming the job is done, or stop the work of continuous evangelisation. Once a ministry is beginning to get established be careful not to leave too soon. In doing so and seeking to hand over the ministry to a pastor or another missionary make sure he is the right man for the ministry. Sometimes a national man shows an inclination to the ministry, but he barely expresses his interest when he finds the ministry thrust upon him. This is often something that he has been unprepared for and the ministry soon folds, whilst the missionary can go back to America as the “veteran”, proclaiming he has now planted a church and handed it over to a national pastor. One missionary was even heard to say, “I am training this young man for the ministry, but he doesn’t know it yet.” What a nonsense this is.

The opposite is also true, some missionaries are quite happy to gather a group, no matter how they gather it, and settle in as pastors rather than the church-planting evangelists they were sent to be. They sometimes have the unfortunate attitude that the British can’t do it. They are wrong. The right man, adequately trained, placed into a church that is suitably prepared, will do a good work. But, when a missionary adopts this approach his goal changes from giving the nationals the gospel, to just having a group of people to minister to.

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The Danger of Leaving Too Suddenly

Sometimes things happen in one's family circle that may call for a sudden departure; a loved one is dying, someone in America has taken seriously ill, a surgery must be performed, or some other calamity. People understand when things happen you may need to go Stateside. However, a sudden return to the US without adequate explanation and preparation can be desperately damaging to your ministry. The consequence is that people feel uncared for, you lose credibility, and the ministry suffers. There are very few jobs in the secular world where one can just up sticks and go with hardly a by-your-leave. To treat God's work that way, or God's people that way is really to abuse privilege. People may forgive it, but they likely won't forget it, and their faith in you as a trustworthy leader might be irreparably damaged.