



## RETURNING TO MTD ON HOME ASSIGNMENT

We've said it before, but it bears repeating: your home assignment has the capacity, when properly understood and planned for, to breathe new life, courage, and conviction into your soul that enables years of fruitful work. On the flip side, because of poor expectations (dreading it or imagining America will be some new-creation utopia), it has the capacity to disappoint, frustrate, and wear you down as you spend several months away from your new home, living like a nomad, becoming disoriented by how your friends and church have changed. We want the first narrative to be your story, and to that end there are several resources you should check out.

- ["Home Assignment" course in LEARN](#)
- [Additional Furlough Resources in Solomon](#)

This guide is intended to help you flourish in your upcoming furlough by preparing you to prepare for and maximize the opportunities for MTD that your time stateside affords you.

### Renew Your Mind

Let's face it. It's been a while since you've really turned all your focus toward full-time MTD, and many of us, when we think of picking up that phone, have a few buried (or maybe not-so-buried) fears. They are, in some ways, the same fears we faced when we raised our initial support. Yet they also have the potential to be more insidious, because now they might be compounded by the memories of our past experience.

If you're here, you're not alone. We've spoken to full-time missionaries who have lived on financial support for twenty years who still find themselves with unfounded fears floating in their hearts that have been un-confronted while their focus was on full-time ministry elsewhere.

Even if that's not you, and you're feeling full of confidence, it behooves us to return to some of the basics and re-assess our foundation. Consider some of these questions:

- There are many godly vocations. Can I reaffirm that God has called me to this ministry, at this time, and in this place?



- There are many biblical models of obtaining financial resources. Do I believe that God has called me to Ministry Team Development — living in dependence on the greater body of Christ?

## Resources

- [“Biblical Foundations” course in LEARN](#)
- [A Spirituality of Fundraising](#)

## Set Your Attitude: Boldness

In addition to refreshing our hearts and minds on our call to both MTD and our ministry, a return to MTD is an opportunity to review the things that God has done over the last few years. What are the effects of your ministry efforts? What stories have moved you? What experiences have challenged you? What important tasks are still undone and people unreached? What needs drive us to seek the power of Jesus to do more?

Reflection not only equips us to report to our donors, but stirs a spirit of celebration and gratitude in us that will affect how we re-engage in MTD. More specifically, the stories of all God has done should give us boldness as we approach current and potential ministry partners. Don't be afraid to share the positive stories of what God has done in and through you. After all, this isn't the story of what Joe Missionary is doing, but what God is doing, and the invitation to join God in his work is as relevant now as it was when you first embarked on MTD. Boldness in MTD will flow, not from greater confidence in your track-record, but from greater confidence in Christ's.

## Establish Two Clear Goals: A Dollar Amount & Date

There are two key questions you must answer before embarking on this season of MTD: 1) How much do I need to raise?, and 2) When do I need it?" We are talking about specific, concrete goals. "As much support as we can get," is true for nearly any missionary, but infinity makes for poor communication and vision as you lead your partners into the next season of ministry.

*Let's look at an example. Jeff has a current support goal of \$6,514 but is showing only about \$4,950 in active recurring giving each month. He's getting by, but there is not room for ministry expenses. And because of the lower funding, Jeff hasn't taken his last offered raise, which would increase his support goal even more. The shortfall is \$1,564. After prayer, Jeff decides to set his intermediate goal at \$1,500 of new financial support and celebrate if it goes even above and beyond that.*

*Jeff writes, "We have an immediate need for an additional \$1,500 in monthly giving in order to sustain our ministry with Reliant and our new church plant."*



Setting a specific date is just as crucial as a specific amount. When do you need it? “Right away! Any time!” These answers may be true, but are just as unhelpful as not communicating a clear dollar amount. A ministry partner needs to know “when?”, if they are to respond with any sort of urgency.

Back to Jeff. He’s found that he’ll be able to cut away from full-time ministry responsibilities in mid-April and has most of the summer set aside for MTD. He’s hoping he can meet his goals by the end of June, but isn’t sure. In order to communicate a clear deadline for donors, however, he chooses July 15 as his deadline. This gives an urgent window of time, but leaves enough space so that potential partners don’t delete an old email because they think the date has passed.

*Jeff writes further, “In order to return to full-time ministry, we need to meet this goal by July 15.”*

## Resources

- [Suggested Home-Assignment Prep Timeline](#)
- [MTD Goal-Setting Worksheet](#)

## Prep: It Takes Time!

One of the most common mistakes is underestimating the time needed to get momentum going when returning to full-time MTD. The following checklist contains tasks that can be done part-time while you are pulling out of other ministry responsibilities in preparation for your Home Assignment, but may still take several weeks:

- Update photos
  - New (high-quality) personal and family photos for your MTD presentation. Do you need a photographer?
  - Ministry action-shot photos. Do you have enough to give an update story in-person? Shots of a particular person you plan to tell partners about?
- Update story
  - Reflect: What key success stories and important milestones have you had over the last couple years? Write it, then edit it down until it’s brief and compelling.
  - Do you need/have permission from those you might share about?
  - Do you plan to make a new MTD presentation book to represent some of the stories? ([see Solomon page instructions](#))



- Scrub your database
  - Add information that you've previously forgotten to add
  - Check the giving situation of each partner and take up-to-date notes
  - Re-sort names. Compile a list in order.
  - Update contact information! Do you have up-to-date email addresses, phone numbers, and mailing addresses for each name on your list? Consider strategies to update them such as Reliant's current data, Facebook, contact through friends, calling churches, etc.
  
- Write a letter introducing your full-time MTD time to your supporters before it starts
  
- Update your missionary profile on Reliant.org ([see Solomon page instructions](#))

Take these into consideration as you review our suggested timeline for Home Assignment preparation.

## **Game Plan: Who to Contact & When**

There are several categories of contacts to consider as you step back in MTD and, depending on the time you plan to give to MTD, prioritizing whom to give priority will be crucial. Here are some categories to consider:

- Current Partners = current recurring gift financial partners
- Special Gift Partners = have given/periodically give special gifts
- Prayer Partners = the wider mailing list; receive regular prayer updates; may give periodic special gifts
- Former Partners = previously gave on a committed basis but don't any longer
- Other Potential Partners = new connections received, new names brainstormed, etc.

Depending on your experience in ministry and your freedom to travel, we recommend the following orders of priority:

### **More than Four Years Since Initial MTD**

1. Current Partners
2. Local networking / Connections from Current Partners
3. Special Gift Partners
4. Prayer Partners
5. Former Partners



## **Less than Four Years since Initial MTD**

1. All Pending Names from Initial MTD
2. Revisit Sending Church(es) / New Connections from Sending Church(es)
3. Current Partners
4. Local networking / Connections from Current Partners
5. Prayer Partners
6. Connections from Prayer Partners
7. Any other names from brainstorming session(s)

## **Resources**

- Use the [Location Detail Worksheet](#) to help plan trips and strategy
- [“Building Your Database: Namestorming” course in LEARN](#)

## **Communicate Early, Concretely and Often**

We use the term “partner” frequently around here, but the reality is that partners don’t happen automatically but through relationships of trust. And one of the most significant ways to build trust is through consistent communication. Donors passively sit on the sidelines, and we fear that they will withdraw funding if they see ineffectiveness or something they do not like in the ministry. Partners, on the other hand, have a sense of ownership or stake in the ministry. Even though they are not on the frontlines, they see challenges as problems of their own — ones they want to help solve.

A missionary who thinks of their ministry team as “donors” may think of them as the opposing team, to be played with good strategy and a fear of loss. However, thinking of them as “partners” puts them on the same team, and each partner becomes a possible ambassador for our funding. To engage and activate our partners’ participation with the full-time MTD push, we need to communicate early, concretely, and regularly through the process:

- Write a brief prayer update that stands out, explains the funding shortfall, your plan to return to full-time support raising, and an invitation to pray with you. Keep it very short and noticeable in order to maximize the chances of getting read. Don't feel obligated to give a ministry update at the same time — you’ve done this in other letters.
- Send in “multiple dimensions.” If you typically email your prayer letter, recruit some stateside help (like an Advocacy Team or missions team at your Sending Church) to send a postal mail copy to everyone as a follow up. If you typically use postal mail, send an



email with the identical letter attached. (“I just recently sent this in the mail, but wanted to make sure you didn’t miss it, so I’ve attached it to this email.”) Handwrite intros or p.s. on the postal letter.

- Promise to call every letter recipient, then do it. This will take a lot of time, but it’s worth it to build a true partner team to sustain you for years. Depending on the circumstances, set up a time to meet in person, via Zoom, or a phone call at minimum.
- Consider sending funding updates every few weeks and continue to invite partners to follow along and pray with you as you pursue your goal! Create a visual graph; a concrete date and dollar number make this possible.

### **Invitations to Partnership**

Prioritize your ask according to your needs and who you are contacting.

Financial: Increase Giving	<i>“I am so thankful for your partnership these past two years, and wanted to see if you would consider doubling your current monthly giving to Reliant?”</i>
Financial: New Giving	<i>“We’ve loved sending you our prayer updates these past two years, and I wonder if you would consider becoming a regular monthly financial partner?”</i>
Financial: Special Gift	<i>“Your special gifts in the past have been such a blessing, and we have an upcoming need of \$1500 for a Furlough Debrief. Would you be willing to consider giving to Reliant to cover that cost?”</i>
Connections: Re-asking for Names	<i>“You were instrumental in connecting us to a number of people to share about our ministry prior to us launching. Thank you! Now that we’re back to full-time support raising, this would be a crucial way to help again.”</i>
Referrals: First-time Names Ask	<i>“It’s great we’re getting to speak again because there is a really key way you can help that we haven’t been able to talk about before...”</i>



## Increase Ask: Aim High

The people most committed to your ministry are those who have already invested time, money, or emotional energy to it. The partners who are committed to financially supporting your ministry every month are invested in you, want to see you flourish, and therefore are unlikely to be offended by a strong ask. If they can't say yes, they likely wish they could.

Therefore, aim high when you invite a current partner to increase their giving. Don't begin with an ask to increase by \$10 each month; this is too low. For instance, consider your total goal. If you have a 50% yes rate for current partners, this would be not nearly enough. Of course, consider past increases as this may not be effective for a partner who has already increased in the last year or two.

**Recommended: Ask all partners to double their current monthly commitment.** Not all will be able to consider this, but you can always graciously ask for a lower amount. Many will say yes, especially if they understand your total need and the date you need it by.

*"In order to meet this goal, would you consider doubling your monthly gift to Reliant? You have been a valuable part of this ministry team, and rather than continue to expand the team I would love to invest more deeply. In whatever way God leads, I have been thrilled to see the fruit that has abounded from our partnership together, and look forward to continuing that in the years to come!"*

## Special Gift Ask: Clear and Specific

If your primary need is monthly giving, avoid the special gift ask until you've asked clearly for recurring giving first. Donors need to understand clearly what you need, and may think that giving an additional \$500 right now is just as good (or better) than increasing their monthly gift. If you do ask for a special gift, share a concrete ministry need, such as a seminary class or new ministry computer, and be bold to ask if they could cover the entire cost. You'll be surprised at what people will do, especially to cover a one-time, concrete gift. A \$1,000 laptop is not too much to ask if they believe it will have a significant impact on your ministry. If they cannot afford this, they'll let you know and then you can ask for a contribution toward the goal.

**Important policy reminder:** Even though we have personal needs, we can't directly ask people to give toward, say, a car repair because this isn't a direct Reliant ministry need. Think "Could I legitimately reimburse this cost?" before you use it as an example.



## Names Re-Ask

When asking for connections with those you have previously asked this, be sure to:

- Acknowledge your previous invitation. *“A couple of years ago you helped us meet a few other people to tell about our ministry. Thank you! Now that we’re back to full-time support raising, this might be a key way you could help again.”*
- Report back on the results of a previous request. If you were able to share with someone, or especially if someone became a partner, lead with this story! *“Your connection to Mike last year was such a blessing to our ministry! Not only was he thrilled about what God was doing in London, but he joined as a monthly financial partner!”*
- Remember the basics of getting connected: cast vision for why; brainstorm through potential categories; collect contact info; clarify how to get in touch
- Invite them to feel ownership of adding people to the partner team. *“You and others on our current financial team will be able to cover some of the increased need for Reliant, but if we work together we can add others to the team who care about this ministry as well...”*
- Ask about previous referrals that never seemed to pan out. *“Does it make sense for me to try them again?”*

## Resource

- [“Getting Connected to Others” course in LEARN](#)

## In-Person or Virtual?

For many of you returning to full-time MTD, especially if you have other priorities for your home assignment, you will have to decide how many in-person appointments you can do.

Scott Morton, support-raising guru for the Navigators, holds a “every five years” minimum rule for seeing partners face to face. If it’s been that long since you’ve been able to visit with partners, it’s recommended you take advantage of the full-time break to do so. (Of course an inefficient visit to a faraway state may not always be possible, but consider if a better time will ever appear.)

For most of us, a full-time return to MTD that lasts longer than 4-6 weeks should likely involve seeing many partners face-to-face and related travel. This investment in the relationship will pay dividends in the responsiveness and long-term stability of your team.



**Note:** In the current pandemic age, Zoom appointments are not only culturally appropriate, but for many of your partners may be the preferred method. Regardless of the form it takes, commit to connecting “face to face” with as many people as you can.

## Digital Technology & Social Media

As the world has turned digital, some of the best MTD tools are digital — and formerly reliable paper letters and normal phone calls aren’t always a best practice. In fact, some will find that with cell phones and universal caller ID, the phone call has become a less obvious option for initial contact with MTD. Since technology use and norms shift rapidly, be sure to get up to speed so you can be most effective in your MTD.

### Quick Tips

- A personal missionary website, even if very basic, is almost more important than a printed piece.
- Personal emails work well as a first “hello” tool to re-initiate contact with partners.
- Sometimes a text message works in place of a voicemail.
- Facebook and Twitter status messages can help communicate with those that love and feel ownership with your ministry, including ministry partners. “We reached 50% of our special financial goal for this summer today: keep praying!”

### Resource

- [Facebook strategy](#)

### Checklist Summary

- Renew your mind on your call to ministry and MTD
- Set your attitude: boldness
- Establish two clear goals: a dollar amount and a date
- Prep! Get new photos, scrub your data, more
- Game plan: chose who to contact and in what order
- Communicate early, concretely, and often
- Know which ask is appropriate and refresh yourself on each
- Know how to ask for an increase
- Decide how much in-person MTD you need to do
- Get current with the digital world

