

THE SENDING NET

When a missionary (and family) is sent overseas to minister in another culture, they are never sent alone. Hebrews 12:1-2 talks about the “great cloud of witnesses” surrounding us from history as we seek to serve our sovereign Lord, and there is likewise a cloud of those who stand behind the missionary and team. There are financial donors, prayer partners, personal encouragers, and those who assist with their logistical or missions expertise.

One way to think about all of these people is as a Sending Net for the missionary. They serve as a safety net for needs and cares while helping send the missionary forth in service. For Reliant, there are five sources which may make up this sending net: You, the missionary, and your family; a personal advocate; the sending church; the receiving church and team; and Reliant. Below is an outline of the role of each source in assisting you as you bring the light of Christ to the nations.

Personal and Family Care

The first line of defense (and spiritual offense as well) is you and your family. As you are well aware, the responsibility for the welfare of any believer and their family initially rests on their own commitment to wholeness and holiness. Establishing a consistent devotional relationship with Christ, maintaining proper health and fitness, resolving conflicts in a timely and appropriate manner, and pacing your ministry and personal schedule are essential for long term impact and avoiding the burn-out that many missionaries have experienced. In addition, all of the above help guard the heart from perceived and sudden temptations.

There is no question that as both a literal and figurative ambassador, you are a spiritual target. The best safety net in the world cannot help if we fall beyond its stretch. Personal responsibility for maintaining your sending net is a must.

The Personal Advocate

While you are overseas, not all of your possessions, money, etc. go with you. Bank accounts, insurance contacts, access to pharmaceuticals, and other needs will remain here in the US. However, you need reliable access to these things. At the same time, there will arise legal and personal needs that will require someone's presence to be resolved while you are away.

All of the above require that you select one or two key individuals to serve as your Personal Advocate (PA) stateside. This person needs to be someone you trust implicitly as they will assume Power of Attorney for you, handle your US banking interests, sign for you on legal documents, and assume other responsibilities for which you will be ultimately held responsible. Reliant encourages you to take sufficient prayer, time and counsel in selecting this individual.

Another role which either the individual PA or another may take on is sending your prayer letters and otherwise assisting you with maintaining your MTD team. It is helpful if this person receives some training to enable them to adequately understand the nuances of contact, thank you notes, and requesting upgrades, etc. on your behalf.

Finally, this individual is the person who will go to bat for you when things need to be done in the States. Thus, it is helpful to enlist a person who will be available and determined in following through on your needs. The men and women who serve in this capacity are true gems, and enable many a missionary to rest easy knowing that their home affairs are well in order.

Sending Church Care

We live in exciting times for the church! One of the most significant undercurrents of the rise in short term mission teams is the fact that the church has sought, over the last twenty years or so, to reclaim her biblical role in missions. As more long term missionaries are now beginning to be sent, the local church is also getting more involved in the process of preparing, screening, and sending out her own to the lost overseas. With this rise comes the opportunity to support missionary care as well. It is every missionary's hope that back home on Sunday and throughout the week there are individuals and congregations who are thinking about them, praying for them, and pulling together different ways to encourage and support them. **Please read the article “Missions Partner Prayer” on p. 71.**

Reliant

is deeply committed to the local sending church fulfilling this vital role in the ministry of each overseas missionary. We invite you to engage your pastor/leadership team in establishing a small task force who can coordinate the efforts of the church to provide moral, emotional, and spiritual support to you in addition to the financial and prayer support which you may already anticipate.

Churches can send appropriate care packages, and organize letter writing campaigns to you and your individual family members. They can send mission teams both to assist with your outreach, construction, etc. as well as to bring refreshment from home in the form of familiar faces and renewing friendships. The pastors may make occasional visits to your location for insight and pastoral care. And the church can determine the best ways to foster diligent, vital prayer on your behalf as well as that of those whose lives you are touching with the gospel and disciple-making.

Reliant encourages you to take the time before your departure to work with your local sending church to see their support for you grow. We would be happy to come alongside to provide perspective, context, counsel and support to the church as appropriate.

On Field Supervision and Care

Reliant missionary's primary supervision and care will be provided for by the recipient international church. Each recipient church understands and agrees to the following in order for a missionary to join their team:

- 1) A detailed job description.
- 2) Local supervision with regular checkup times. Inform Reliant what the frequency and structure is.
- 3) A willingness of the local supervisor to work with Reliant supervision.
- 4) A host family to help integrate the missionary family relationally into the life of the local church.
- 5) Help with logistics of housing, food, etc.

The value of this team provision cannot be overstated. This group becomes your new family. They serve as confidants, friends, coworkers, and brothers and sisters of faith. Your pastor/supervisor plays a key role in your ministry direction; and, consequently, in your overall wellbeing.

Throughout the history of the church, the number one reason for missionaries leaving the field is due to an inability to be united with their fellow missionaries. Reliant places an essential value upon the team working well together not only in the context of work duties, but also in Christian love for one another. Because of the level of unity needed, Reliant encourages you to begin developing your friendships with fellow missionaries now before you move.

Be open about your expectations; listen to their counsel. Share your heart and ask a lot of questions to best get to know these dear, precious brothers and sisters upon whose spiritual lives you will depend in the months and years to come.

Reliant Missionary Care

Reliant is developing a comprehensive missionary care system to provide you (and your family) with the best resources possible to support the labor of love to which you have committed yourself. It takes a lot to get you onto the international field, and Reliant desires that nothing save God's calling you back home to the US deter you from the ministry you will establish overseas.

Some of the services Reliant has put in place for missionary care include your New Staff Training, MTD coaching, employment supervision, international church coaching, and Finance and Human Resource departments at Headquarters dedicated to researching and serving your present and future career-related needs. In addition, we have established an annual Staff Retreat in Europe, counseling options, and a missionary liaison to be your advocate here at headquarters. Should you have any questions, need resolution to a Reliant-related item, or simply seek input on issues related to your move, service, etc. overseas, please don't hesitate to contact us at missions@gcmweb.org for assistance.

Finally, please be encouraged to look online for additional resources. Websites like <http://www.missionresources.com/> is a great assortment of resources for missionaries.