

Guide for Returning to Full-Time MTD

Freed up to return to full-time support raising? Here's some key advice to make the most of it.

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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 fears. They are, in some ways, the same fears we faced when we raised our initial support. But they also have the potential to be more insidious because now they can 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 with families for twenty years who still find themselves with some unfounded fears floating in their hearts, unconfronted while their focus was on full-time ministry elsewhere.

Even if we are confident, it behooves us to return to some of the basics. These questions can help:

- There are many godly vocations. Do 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?

You may find it helpful to review some of the available materials on the biblical examples of missionary fundraising in scripture and the practical advantages of MTD in today's world.

Resources

- [3.3 Biblical Principles of MTD](#)

Set your attitude: Boldness

In addition to refreshing our hearts and minds on our call to ministry, the appropriateness of MTD and our call to do MTD, 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 will help us report to our donors well and revive a spirit of celebration and gratitude that will show through. Importantly, our experience should also give us a boldness as we approach current and potential ministry partners. "This is what God is doing: Will you join us?" is a statement that is as true as ever. A full-time ministry worker has an established track record that is important for donors to see. Don't be afraid to share positively about your own great ability to impact others as you've matured.

"With five years of campus ministry under my belt, we've found our Christian character and ministry skills increase with every gospel moment or challenge. We are having a greater impact than we have ever had, and this thought has convinced us to be bold in asking for your increased financial support. This is the right time."

Establish two clear goals: a dollar amount and a date

The questions of “how much do you need to raise” and “when do you need it?” are key. We need concrete goals here. “As much support as we can get” is true for nearly any missionary, but infinity makes for poor communication and vision as we lead ourselves and our ministry partners into the next phase of our 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 date is crucial too. When do we need it? Right away! Any time! But these answers are as indefinite as not communicating a clear dollar goal. A donor needs to know “when.”

Jeff has 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 leaves enough space so that donors don't delete an old email just 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.”

Resource

- Use the [MTD Goal Setting Worksheet](#) to help you figure out a good deadline.

Prep: It Takes Time!

Common mistake: underestimating the start-up time needed to get to full-time MTD momentum. The following checklist is the kind of thing that can be done part-time while you are pulling out of other ministry responsibilities but may 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! It can fall out-of-date so quickly. Do you have an up-to-date email address, phone number and mailing address for each name on your list? Begin strategies to update them. Consider 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](#))
- ☐ Have you created a missionary profile card to give out at appointments? ([see Solomon instructions to visit Copycat](#))

Game Plan: Who to contact in the right order

- Partners = current recurring gift financial partners
- 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
- Alumni = students or individuals impacted by your ministry, church plant, etc. who may have moved on but still have loyalty to your work
- Current Ministry Participants = appropriate ask of people who currently benefit from your ministry (review biblical concerns and local ministry /church policies first).

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

Full-time Staff with longer than four years since initial MTD and time/ability to travel

1. Current Partners

Location A

2. Alumni

3. Current Prayer Partners

4. Former Partners

5. Referrals from Current Partners & Alumni & Prayer Partners

Location B

6. Alumni

7. Current Prayer Partners

8. Former Partners

9. Referrals from Current Partners & Alumni & Prayer Partners in Location B

10. Current Ministry Participants

11. Local networking or other contacts

Full-time Staff with longer than four years since initial MTD but restricted time to travel

1. Current Partners

2. Current Ministry Participants

3. Alumni

4. Local networking or other contacts

5. Prayer Partners

6. Former Partners

Full-time Staff with less than four years since initial MTD

1. All Pending Names from Initial MTD

2. Current Ministry Participants or Recent Alumni

3. Revisit Sending Churches, Recent Name Pools

4. Current Partners & Prayer Partners

5. Referrals as received from all of above

Resource

- Use the [Location Detail Worksheet](#) to help plan trips and strategy.

Communicate early, concretely and often

This is your chance to continue to turn donors into partners. 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. *How ever, 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 letter that stands out and only explains the funding shortfall and your plan to return to full-time support raising. 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, 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. If you are following up Current Partners, this may already take months. It’s worth it. You want them to know what’s going on. Depending on the circumstances, set up a time to meet in person, a distance appointment or do a call for decision.
- ☐ Consider sending funding updates every few weeks via email or online. Invite partners to follow along as you pursue your goal! Create a visual graph. A concrete date and dollar number make this possible.

Asks

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

Financial: Increase Recurring Ask	“Would you consider doubling your current monthly giving to Reliant?”
Financial: New Recurring Ask	“We’ve loved sending you our prayer updates for a while now. Would you consider becoming a regular monthly giving partner?”
Financial: Special Gift Ask	“We understand that you’d prefer just to give in noncommitted annual amounts. Tell me this: We have an important upcoming cost of \$1,000 for seminary training this summer — would you be willing to consider giving to Reliant to cover that cost?”
Referrals: Re-asking for Names	“I know a couple 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 to help again.”
Referrals: First-time Names Ask	“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...”

Aim high on your ask for increase

The people most committed to our ministry are those who have already invested time, money or emotional energy in it. Our partners, sending money each month, care much about the success of what we are doing. Further, they are not likely to be offended by a strong ask. If they can’t say yes, they likely wish they could.

Therefore, set your ask high. Do not begin with an increase ask of \$10 additional monthly. 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.)

Recommended: Ask all partners to double their currently 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 date you need it by. (Of course, consider past increases. This ask may not be as effective for a partner who has already increased in the last year or two.)

"In order to meet this goal, would you consider doubling your monthly gift to Reliant? Not everyone will be able to do this, but we believe many will, and we believe this investment is seeing much fruit right now. We pray you can give as generously as you are able and as God leads. Regardless of what you can do in addition, we remain incredibly grateful for what you are already investing. Thank you. We'd love to give you a call really soon—let's catch up since it's been such a long while. This is a good excuse to connect."

Special Gift Ask

If your goal is monthly, avoid the special gift ask until you've asked clearly for recurring giving first. Donors need to understand clearly what you need. They may think that giving an additional \$500 right now is just as good (or better) than increasing their monthly gift.

If you 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 big impact on your ministry. If they cannot afford this, they'll let you know. 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 referrals with those you have previously asked this, be sure to:

- Acknowledge previously bringing this up. "I know a couple 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 to help again. We need more people to join our team."
- Report back on results of the previous request. If you were able to share with someone, or especially if someone became a partner, lead with this story. Often we forget to do this, and partners might not realize how crucial this is.
- Remember the basics: connect things to the ministry need and remind them that you are completely dependent on others helping you like this, brainstorm before getting contact information, etc.
- 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?"

In-person or not in-person?

For many of us returning to full-time MTD, we will have to decide how many in-person partners appointments we 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 relationship will pay dividends in better responses to both financial and referral asks and the long-term stability of your team.

Digital Technology & Social Media

As the world has turned digital, some of the best new MTD tools are digital — and formerly reliable paper letters and normal phones aren't always the best basic go-to. 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 these things change, consider your full-time MTD a good time to get up to speed on the latest so you can be most effective with 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](#)
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Checklist

- ☐ 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
- ☐ Know how to ask for an increase
- ☐ Decide how much in-person MTD you need to do
- ☐ Get current with the digital world

Resources (complete list)

- [3.3 Biblical Principles](#)
- [Goal Setting Worksheet](#)
- [Editing Your Reliant.org Missionary Profile Photo & Descriptions](#)
- [Creating a Missionary Profile Card](#)
- [Location Detail Worksheet](#)
- [Facebook strategy](#)