

HOW DO I CHOOSE A MISSION AGENCY?

FIRST THINGS FIRST

Choosing a mission agency is a crucial decision that will affect both the joy and the effectiveness of your ministry for a long time. Prayer and communication can help you make the right choice. There are many good mission agencies, but not all may be right for you. Finding the agency that best fits you and your ministry takes some work, but it's well worth it.

► Your Church

Your sending church is the place to begin. Agencies exist to help churches fulfill God's mandate for worldwide missions. If you haven't already done so, talk with your pastor or missions pastor and involve him in the decision-making process. He or someone else in the church leadership who has a heart for missions can pray, advise, and talk with you through the process.

► Your Call

Before you begin to gather information on mission agencies, think about what God is calling you to do and how your personality and spiritual gifts fit into His plan. God is preparing you for a specific ministry that will glorify Him, and He is preparing that ministry for you. A clear vision of your call and of what the future can hold if you obey will guide you in the choice of an agency. At FIM you develop a ministry plan that will guide your ministry and taking a DiSC personality test and spiritual gifts test is part of the process.

Never compromise your call!

STEPS TO

RESEARCHING A

MISSION AGENCY

► Step One: Elimination

List agencies you know of and add new ones you discover. Then check their websites or brochures. Some may be eliminated right away because of doctrinal differences, or because they don't minister where God is sending you, or don't do what He has called you to do.

How do you really get to know an agency and what questions should you ask? After you look at their website and brochures, most questions will need to be asked personally. This is a good thing because it gives you the opportunity, not only to get the information, but to see the heart of the agency as well as its face.

► Step Two: Relationships

After you have eliminated incompatible agencies, establish a relationship by phone or email with someone in the leadership of the agencies that may fit, and get a feel for the "personality" of the agency as you collect information. Talk with one or more missionaries from that agency to get their perspective.

What are some of the specific things you should discover about an agency you are considering?

► Step Three: Doctrine

Doctrinal agreement is essential for an effective ministry partnership. Be sure that you understand and agree with the doctrinal positions of the agency. Ask questions about anything that isn't clear. Sometimes different people use a term in different ways and a discussion will clarify the position, revealing whether you believe the same or not.

Sometimes what is omitted is as important as what is included. Are there key areas that are not addressed in the doctrinal statement? Why? Does the agency hold its doctrinal position consistently on the field as well as in the U.S? Some things may be held as positions of the agency, but are not dealt with in the doctrinal statement. What does the agency say about:

- Ecumenism
- Social Gospel
- Charismatic/Sign Gifts
- Prosperity Gospel
- Versions of Scripture

► Step Four: Values

What the agency lists as its core values is a clue to its heart. The history, trends, and changes in an agency also help to reveal its priorities. Do they have a specific focus (ministry or location) that doesn't fit with your call? What part does the local church play? How do they view the national church? Do they promote or seek to minimize paternalism and dependence? What is their attitude toward the missionary and his/her ministry goals? How do they promote child safety?

► Step Five: Personality

Every mission agency has its own personality. Just as your spouse's personality is important, so you need to get to know the personality of your agency and be sure you are compatible. Being "married" to a good mission agency with an incompatible personality can be extremely frustrating!

- Are they corporate or family oriented?
- Are they a guardian of the status quo or a facilitator of ministry?
- Is their oversight authoritarian, coaching, laissez-faire, or a mix?
- How do they respond to a missionary with a problem in life or ministry?
- Do they provide excellent member care?
- Do you have the freedom to serve according to your strengths?

► Step Six: Goals

- What are your ministry goals? Are they compatible with the agency goals?
- What is the agency's vision for the future? How does that impact you?
- What is the scope of the agency's ministry? Can they partner with your ministry in the location to which God is sending you? What if God should lead you to a change of ministry or location in the future? Does the agency have the flexibility to allow for that?
- What are your expectations? What does the agency expect of you?
- Is the agency financially sound? Can you see their audited financial statements?

► Step Seven: Policies

Investigating all the details of an agency's policies may be daunting and not something you would do until you are nearly certain that it's the agency God has for you, but here are some key areas you should ask about:

- What is the process for joining?
- What are educational or other requirements?
- What about the role of women?
- Do they encourage and allow for continuing education?
- How highly do they value language acquisition and acculturation? How do they help you adjust?
- What are their policies for return visits to see family and support partners? How long? How often? What is expected of you on U.S. assignment?
- Any other issues that are important to you?

IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

FAMILY LIFE

What are the responsibilities of a ministry spouse? What allowances or policies exist related to the education of children? What is their policy on divorce/remarriage?

MEMBER CARE

Does their perspective on member care seem more positive (facilitating) or negative (putting out fires)? What do their missionaries say about the way the agency provides care?

ACCOUNTABILITY

What is their accountability structure? Does it seem to be more geared to "checking up on you" or "helping you succeed?"

REPORTS

Will you receive field visits from the home office? Does the mission require regular affirmation of the doctrinal statement? Will you meet with the member care department when you are on Home Assignment? What happens if a missionary does have a serious problem (physical, spiritual, marital, relational, emotional)? Is there a mandatory retirement age? What happens when a missionary retires?

FINANCES

How much is used to support home office and field administration? What is the policy on educational debt? How is the support level set? Is full support required before you can go to the field? What about health insurance? How good is the coverage? What does it cost? What provisions are made for retirement?

**You will likely have more questions.
Please ask them!**

**IT'S YOUR CALL.
WE'RE HERE TO HELP.**

May God guide and bless you!
www.fim.org

**Partnering with you and your
church to fulfill God's call.**

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Fellowship International Mission
555 South 24th Street | Allentown, PA 18104
(610) 435-9099 | info@fim.org

WWW.FIM.ORG

