

10 Reasons Why Workers Leave the Field and Don't Return . . .

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We are very concerned about people who were planning or praying about long-term service, but then returned from their first term (or a short-term experience) and decided not to go back.

Ten Reasons Why Workers Leave the Field and Don't Return

1. The most important is that ***God has led them to do that***. God often changes our direction and incorporates all of our humanness in it. I would urge you to read Viv Thomas's book 'Second Choice'. Of course even if someone returns because of sin, failure or some other negative factor, God can still over-rule especially if there is reality, brokenness and repentance.

2. ***Poor leadership on the field*** is another reason people 'don't make it' and it is why one of our main ministries must be the training and formation of Godly, gifted leadership which must be combined with helping new believers understand the biblical basis of leadership. There is much abuse and confusion on this subject and so many believers are confused.

3. Equally important is ***unrealistic expectations***. As a book pusher I must confess that it often is books that create this unrealistic expectation. We have too many books with nice formulae and not enough with honesty, balance and biblical reality. Tozer urged us to develop scepticism in connection with some of the things we hear or read about. Godly, gifted leaders are still sinners saved by grace or will continue to sin or fail. We must be ready to forgive and we must be ready to grow together in repentance and brokenness. Leaders have to make hard decisions and with the range of people on most teams, there is always someone who is not happy. This sometimes leads to gossip and soon you will have a mess. If I did not believe that God could work even in the midst of our people-made messes, I think I would become permanently discouraged. (I would love to send you my tape on discouragement).

4. ***Failure in the sexual area*** is another reason for people returning. I could tell some 'horror' stories in this area that you don't want to hear. Pornography, especially on the worldwide web is causing major damage in frontline mission work. Not many are willing to openly talk about it, much less really do something about it. People sometimes face loneliness on the field and this can set them up for a quick (not from God) romance that ends in disaster. I'm urging people to read books on this subject, like 'The Snare' by Lois

Mowday and 'When Good Men Are Tempted' by Bill Perkins. Unfortunately, leaders are often the enemy's targets in this aspect of the spiritual warfare. This is why marital problems often cause people to return home.

5. Personality, strategy and doctrinal **conflict** are also near the top of the list that send people running home for cover. On the practical level there never seems to be enough time to sort everything out and often leaders are on overload and on the way to burnout. How did so many 'grace killers' get on the mission field? Everyone should read Charles Swindoll's 'The Grace Awakening'

6. **Failure in the area of language** and cultural learning and adaptation. Again, I want to affirm that for 46 years I have seen all kinds of people used on the mission field and so let us be slow to judge, especially what God is doing or not doing. If people are learners and are willing to receive correction and keep growing, then there is always hope. Humility and true servanthood can often make up for shortfall in language and other areas. There is just such a wide range of people and ministries that often just a willing and disciplined person can be a great worker and team member. The abuse of grace can also come in and I think we all know that 'grace without discipline can lead to dis-grace' and that in turn can set the work back in very real ways.

7. The **lack of teamwork and pastoral care** is another major factor. Many agencies have improved in this in the past years, but my conviction is that without I Cor. 13 reality, nothing will really work that well. We need people who have proved the reality of God's grace in their lives especially before they get into long-term missions. Short-term missions done the right way can often be a great step in that direction. Some short-term work just helps people put their sins and difficult ways into great cement. That is why it is so good when the discipleship process begins at a very young age. I believe the European Teen Street camp is helping with this as well as other similar events (www.teenstreet.org).

8. Problems and **complexities at home**. In the day of email etc. people on the field are still involved at home. Splits and other problems in their home churches affect them and also often mean there are support drops or they are asked to return.

9. **Shortage of support** or difficult financial pressure. Many never go in the first place because they hate raising support or are unable to raise it. This is a major factor that again we don't like to honestly talk about. The problem and complexities are endless and it's where I need a fresh baptism of Holy Ghost optimism. Please listen to my tape, 'Does the Lack of Funds Hinder God's Work'.

10. **Satan and his forces** are another main reason. We don't want to over-emphasize the devil, but there are many strong verses about him and we know he militantly opposes world evangelisation. He especially loves to sow legalistic and wrong views of God HIMSELF. We are told that he comes sometimes as an angel of light and that he is a roaring lion seeking whom he can devour. This is why a basic Spirit-filled walk with God, or whatever term you want to explain it, is the most important act in staying in the center of God's will.

I'm sure we can all think of other reasons why things don't work out on the field but I feel this is enough for us to think and pray about right now.

Yours for biblical, realistic and God-centered mobilisation in grace and truth.

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