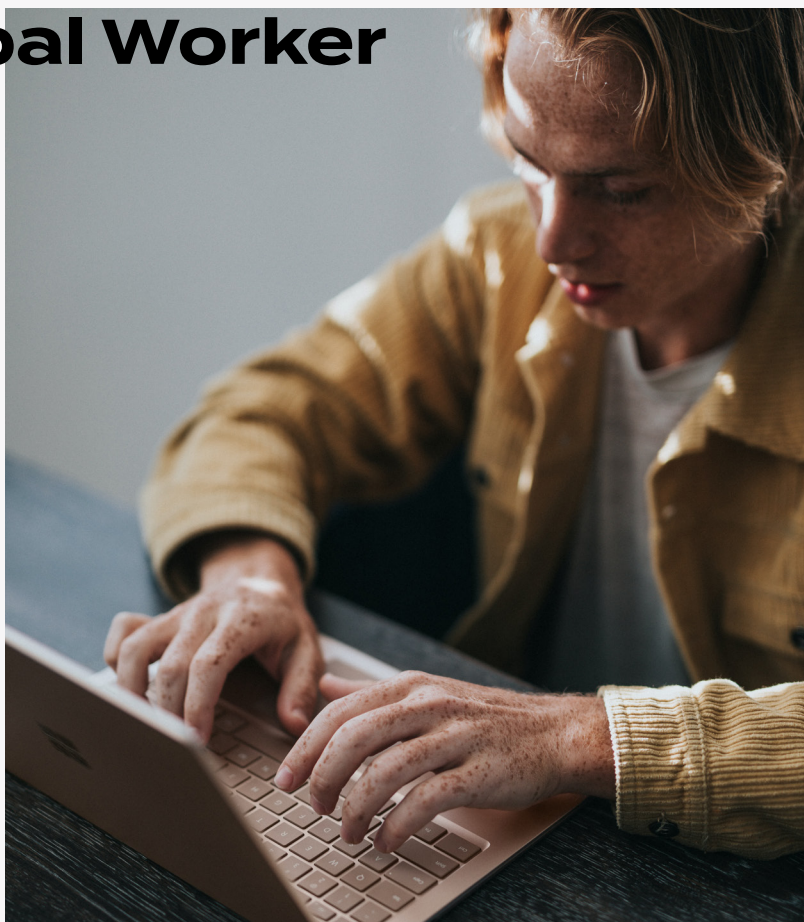


# **Preparing Now to Be a Future Global Worker**



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**I think the Lord might be leading me to take the gospel to the nations, so what should I be doing now to get ready?**

That's a great question. Serving overseas as a global worker—often referred to as a missionary—is a great privilege, but it requires preparation. As you continue to pray about where and how the Lord might have you serve in the future, here are some ways to begin preparing now.

*Note: Radical uses the term “global worker” as another way of referring to a missionary. One reason we use this term is that being referred to openly as a “missionary” can raise security concerns in certain places around the world and make it more difficult to gain access.*

## 1. Talk to your church.

The Great Commission was given to the church. We see this in Jesus' command to “make disciples of all nations,” since making disciples involves “baptizing” and “teaching” them (Matthew 28:19–20). Baptism is a church ordinance that initiates new disciples into the life and fellowship of the church, and it's in the context of the church that new disciples are instructed in the faith and equipped for ministry (Acts 2:42; Ephesians 4:11–13; 1 Corinthians 4:17). The centrality of the church in the Great Commission can be seen throughout the New Testament.<sup>1</sup>

So start by talking to a pastor at your church who knows you and has observed you in the context of the church. You might ask him questions like ...

1. What is our church's process for affirming and sending global workers?
2. What global workers does our church currently partner with, and what does their ministry look like?
3. What are some areas you've observed where I need to grow spiritually?

4. What are some ways I could serve other members and/or the church's leadership?
5. Could I meet with you or another pastor to help me discern how the Lord may be leading me?

In addition to talking to a pastor, seek the counsel and prayer of other church members who know you well. The best way to discern God's will is in the context of the body of Christ.

Of course, this first step assumes that you're a member of a church. If not, then begin by committing to a biblically healthy local church.<sup>2</sup> As we'll see next, being a faithful church member is critical to being a faithful global worker.



## 2. Know the task you're preparing for.

To prepare well for any task, you've got to know what the task is. Here's a brief definition of a global worker and his/her task:

A global worker is a disciple of Jesus set apart by the Holy Spirit and sent out from the church to cross geographic, cultural, and/or linguistic barriers as part of a team of global workers that is making disciples and planting a church (or churches) with the goal of spreading the gospel among unreached peoples and places.

Notice four important aspects of this definition.

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| <p><b>Global workers are sent out from the church.</b></p>   | <p>Planting a church must therefore be central to the global worker's task.</p>  |
| <p>Global workers may work with a missions-sending agency or a parachurch ministry, but that's not who they are ultimately accountable to. They are "sent out from the church" as part of the church's mission (see #1 above). The church should therefore be able to affirm a worker's readiness for the task before sending them out.</p>  | <p>New disciples need to come under the oversight and instruction of qualified leaders (Hebrews 13:17; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; 4:13); they need to be built up by the spiritual gifts of Christ's body (Romans 12:3-8); they need to gather weekly for corporate worship and for encouragement in their faith (Hebrews 10:24-25; Colossians 3:16); they need the church's discipline and accountability (Matthew 18:15-18); they need to partake in the Lord's Supper with brothers and sisters in Christ (1 Corinthians 11:17-34); and they need to participate in the church's disciple-making mission (Matthew 28:18-20).</p>  |
| <p><b>Global workers cross barriers for the sake of the gospel.</b></p>  | <p><b>Global workers serve among unreached peoples and places.</b></p>   |
| <p>Regardless of their location, every member of the church should be involved in the church's mission through praying, evangelizing, discipling, giving, serving, etc. But not every member will be sent out to "cross geographic, cultural, and/or linguistic barriers" for the sake of the gospel.</p> <p>Crossing these barriers is a unique aspect of the global worker's task, and it usually requires additional training. (To learn about Radical Training, go to <a href="http://radical.net/training">radical.net/training</a>.)</p>   | <p>The church's mission begins in its own community, but it doesn't stop there. It extends to "all nations" (Matthew 28:19), including those peoples and places that are currently considered unreached. Here's what we mean by the term "unreached":</p> <div><p>Unreached peoples and places are those among whom Christ is largely unknown and the church is relatively insufficient to make Christ known in its broader population without outside help.</p></div> <p>Based on this definition, there's a difference between being "lost" and being "unreached." All people are spiritually lost apart from Christ and in need of the gospel, including those in our own community. But to be unreached means that you lack access to the gospel. There are few, if any, churches or Christians among the unreached, which is why they desperately need global workers sent to them. Currently, it is estimated that there are over 3.2 billion people in the world who are unreached.</p> <p>To find out more about the unreached, go to <a href="http://joshuaproject.net">joshuaproject.net</a> and <a href="http://stratus.earth">stratus.earth</a>.</p> |
| <p><b>Global workers make disciples and plant churches.</b></p>  |  |
| <p>Global workers are sent for a specific purpose, namely, "making disciples and planting a church (or churches)." This doesn't mean these workers should ignore the physical needs of those they are trying to reach, nor does it mean that meeting physical needs can't be an integral part of their ministry. All Christians should be concerned about the needs and suffering of their neighbors. However, the primary reason a church sends global workers is to address people's greatest need—their spiritual need. People need to hear the gospel in order to be saved (Romans 10:17).</p> <p>The global worker's task begins with sharing the gospel, but it doesn't stop there. According to Jesus, making disciples involves "baptizing them ... and teaching them to observe all that I commanded you" (Matthew 28:19-20). Through baptism, new disciples are brought into the life and fellowship of the church, which is the primary context for learning to obey the commands of Jesus.</p> |  |



3. Grow as a disciple.

Global workers are not a separate class of super-Christians. They are men and women who, by the grace of God, have demonstrated maturity in some basic areas of discipleship. That's why preparing to be a global worker involves growing as a disciple right where you are.

After all, if you're not marked by spiritual maturity in your current context, what makes you think you'll be able to effectively disciple others in a context that's unfamiliar and more demanding?

Regardless of where you end up serving, here are some discipleship areas to be growing in ...

| Grow in God's Word.   | Grow in godly character.   |
|---|--|
| <p>Knowing God's Word is not only critical to your own personal spiritual growth—as it is for every Christian—but it is also critical for teaching and discipling others. So be intentional about growing in your understanding of God's Word and in your ability to interpret it rightly. Plan to read through the Old and New Testaments in the coming year, even as you take time to meditate and pray over particular passages.</p> <p>Make sure you have a grasp on the unity of Scripture's grand narrative, a narrative that runs from Genesis to Revelation and finds its fulfillment in Jesus Christ. And become familiar with the fundamental doctrines of the faith: God's attributes, the Trinity, Scripture and revelation, the person and work of Christ, sin, justification, sanctification, the church, the final judgment and eternal life, etc. Ask your church leaders for their recommendations on good biblical resources on these topics.</p> | <p>Godly character should be the aim of every Christian (1 Peter 1:14–16), and it is a prerequisite for serving in the church (1 Timothy 3:1–13). Therefore, those who desire to serve as global workers should be intentional about growing in godliness through spiritual disciplines such as Bible reading and meditation, prayer and fasting, regular fellowship with other believers, etc. Flee sin and pursue righteousness in every area of your life (2 Timothy 2:22), including the area of sexual purity (1 Corinthians 6:18–19). Ask others to hold you accountable and encourage you.</p> <p>Since the task of a global worker includes helping to plant a church, global workers should ideally be qualified to serve as either elders or deacons (or in a deacon-like support role). The qualifications for these roles, which can be found in 1 Timothy 3:1–13 and Titus 1:5–9, are almost entirely related to a person's character. Ask yourself, Would people consider me to be “above reproach” and a good example to imitate?</p> |

| Grow in evangelism and discipleship.   | Grow in service to the church.   |
|--|--|
| <p>Since evangelism and discipleship are at the heart of a global worker's task, be intentional about growing in these areas. Improve your ability to articulate the gospel clearly and ask God to give you greater boldness as you seek to initiate evangelistic conversations. Help new believers learn what it means to follow Jesus by teaching them God's Word and by providing a godly example. At the same time, find older, more mature believers who can help you follow Jesus more faithfully.</p> <p>Evangelism and discipleship aren't always easy, but remember, they will likely be even more difficult while living in a new culture and learning to speak a new language. So grow in your reliance on God's Spirit to apply his Word in your conversations and relationships. Getting on a plane will not magically turn you into a faithful disciple-maker.</p> | <p>It's easy to talk about your love for the church in the abstract without being faithful to a particular body of believers. However, global workers should be known as faithful members of their local church. Make the weekly gathering a priority; submit to the church's leadership; give regularly and sacrificially; serve, pray for, and get to know your fellow church members. How will you know what it looks like to plant a healthy church if you have never been a faithful member of one?</p> <p>Ask one of your church leaders about opportunities to develop biblical leadership skills as you serve the body. And remember, regardless of whether you end up serving as a global worker, being a faithful church member should be the aim of every disciple.</p> |



#### 4. Look for opportunities to serve in a cross-cultural context.

Serve for two weeks, two months, or longer in a culture that's different from your own. If your church doesn't have any opportunities to serve cross-culturally, ask one of your pastors to point you to like-minded organizations and ministries that offer these kinds of opportunities. You might also ask about opportunities to communicate with your church's current missions partners. Find ways to support them and get a glimpse of what life on the field looks like.

Also, don't forget the opportunities for cross-cultural ministry right around you. Whether it's an international student, a refugee family, a neighbor from another country, or a co-worker who practices another religion, get to know them and share the gospel with them. Then, moving beyond your local context, find out about the spiritual and physical needs of the world using resources like [stratus.earth](http://stratus.earth) and [joshuaproject.net](http://joshuaproject.net). Allow these global realities to fuel your prayers and your desire to take the gospel to the unreached.



## 5. Gain work and life experience.

Some people assume that preparing to be a global worker means they need to drop out of school or quit their job. The urgent need to get the gospel to the nations makes everything else feel like a waste of time and money. However, despite the best intentions, this can be a short-sighted perspective. There are multiple reasons for an aspiring global worker to get a degree and/or gain work experience.

### Work and education

First, you never know how God might use your background and training in the future. You may be able to serve others through the knowledge and skills you've acquired. In some situations, a change in your major or your vocation could help you prepare for future ministry opportunities, but don't assume that's always the wisest step.

Second, an education and/or a marketable skill is often needed to gain access to unreached peoples and places. You will need to be able to offer some kind of service to the community in which you live, so keep working hard to improve the opportunities, gifts, and skills that God has given you. These may be the very things that open the door for you to live and minister in an unreached location.

Third, completing a degree program and working hard at a job helps to build resilience, which is critical for carrying out the task of a global worker. If you are unable or unwilling to put in the time and effort to carry out these (and other) adult responsibilities, then your church may be concerned about whether you will be able to endure the everyday challenges that global workers face.

### Trials and suffering

All disciples of Jesus are told to expect opposition and persecution (2 Timothy 3:12; John 16:33), and this is particularly true for those who serve among the hardest-to-reach peoples and places. Of course, there is no magic formula to prepare you for trials and suffering, for it is God who ultimately sustains our faith (Jude 24–25). But God typically uses circumstances and difficulties to produce tested character (Romans 5:4). Therefore, a good question to ask yourself is, How do I respond to trials and suffering?

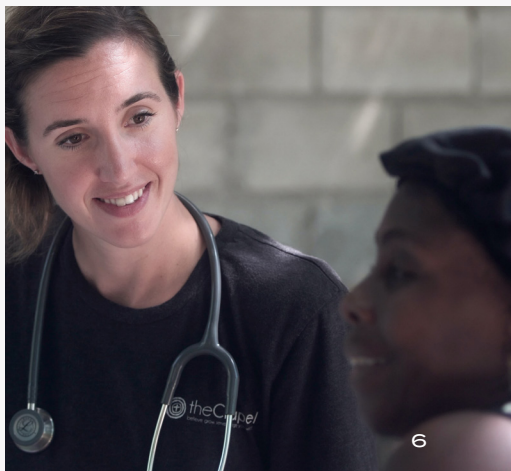
One way to grow in this area is to read what Scripture has to say about the role of suffering in the Christian life and what our response to it should be. Another way to grow is to read missionary biographies.<sup>4</sup> Learn about how God has enabled men and women in the past—with sins and weaknesses like you—to persevere in the face of trials and suffering. Be challenged and encouraged by their example and grow in your reliance on God's faithfulness.

Finally, talk to members of your church who have walked through difficult trials. They may not have served in a cross-cultural context, but they have likely had their faith sustained through circumstances and seasons of life that you have yet to face. Imitate their faith in Christ (1 Corinthians 11:1), even as you hope to model that same faith for others in the future.

### Start right where you're at

As you continue to pray and seek godly counsel from your church about how and where to serve the Lord in the future, don't neglect to follow Jesus faithfully now. Whatever you are doing (or not doing) in your current context is a good indicator of what you will (or won't) do in a new context. So grow as a disciple of Christ and help others do the same. And be the kind of church member that you would want to serve with if you were helping to plant a new church.

Finally, remember that your end goal in preparation is not to serve in a particular location or role. Your end goal is to glorify God however he chooses to use you—whether that's right where you live or among an unreached people group. Either way, you have the privilege of being a part of the church's mission to make disciples of all nations.





## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Jesus promised to build his church (Matthew 16:18), and his original disciples who received the Great Commission helped form the foundation for the church (Ephesians 2:20). The church plays a prominent role throughout the book of Acts as the gospel spreads from Jerusalem to the “ends of the earth” (1:8). For example, the Lord called and commissioned Paul and Barnabas through the church at Antioch for Paul’s first missionary journey (13:1–3). In turn, as disciples were made, Paul and Barnabas “appointed elders in every church” (14:23; see also 20:7) in an effort to oversee these new disciples. The letters of the New Testament also bear witness to the centrality of the church in God’s redemptive purposes; they were written to churches (1 Corinthians 1:2; 1 Thessalonians 1:1) and their teaching pertains directly to the life of the church (1 Corinthians 4:17; 1 Timothy 3:1–13; Titus 1:5; Hebrews 10:24–25; 13:17). In the book of Revelation, Jesus addressed seven churches in Asia (Revelation 2–3) in order to help his people—then and now—persevere in hope. For more on the church’s role in sending global workers, see Caleb Greggson, “[Who Should Send You as a Missionary?](#)”

at [radical.net](#).

<sup>2</sup> For more on what it means to be a biblically healthy church, see David Platt, [12 Traits: Embracing God’s Design for the Church](#).

<sup>3</sup> For more on Scripture’s teaching about suffering and its role in the Christian life, see [Secret Church 12: The Cross and Suffering](#).

<sup>4</sup> For two good missionary biographies, see Courtney Anderson, [To the Golden Shore: The Life of Adoniram Judson](#), and John Piper, [Filling Up the Afflictions of Christ: The Cost of Bringing the Gospel to the Nations in the Lives of William Tyndale, Adoniram Judson, and John Paton](#).

For more resources from Radical related to students and young adults, see our [Student’s Toolkit](#). To find out more about Radical Training, go to [radical.net/training](#).



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