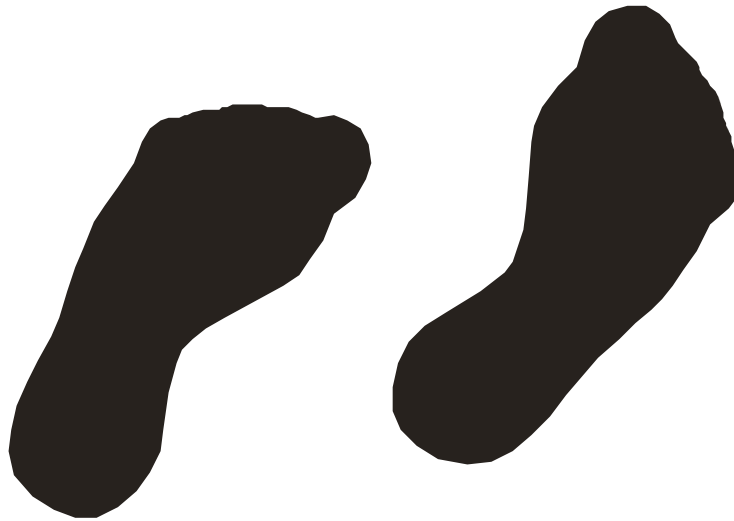


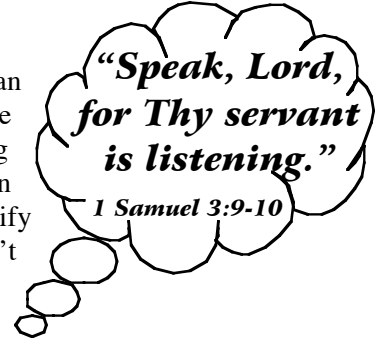
Taking Your Next Step



**Helping you to take the
right steps
toward full-time ministry!**

God's Next Step for You

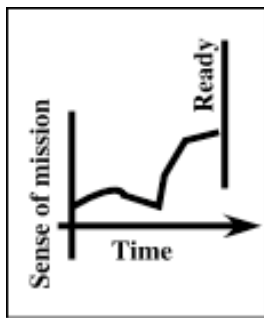
People are being called into ministry all the time. I just heard of a Brazilian physicist and a retired Indian railroad worker who are being called into the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. Many others have sensed God speaking to them too. You might be one of them. We all remember Samuel's call. In the middle of the night he heard God calling him. He needed Eli to clarify some things for him that put him on the right track. Eli's advice wasn't anything astonishing. He told Samuel that when God called again he was to tell the Lord *"Speak, Lord for thy servant heareth."*



Those who sense a pull in the heart from the Lord often have many questions. They are searching for answers, but perhaps even more, they are wondering if they are on the right track. We are unable to provide personal answers here for you in this article. We do, however, hope to keep you on the right track to find the answers that you need. God deals with each of us differently, and yet He brings each willing servant along a similar pathway. We would like to help you see more clearly the boundaries of that path to both encourage and confirm you on your way.

Our world has pretty much secularized the way a person looks for a job or profession. We must refuse the tendency to leave God out of our lives at this critical point. He is the One who both calls and trains. He is the One who gifts us as well as provides for us. A real minister of God will always have his ear highly tuned to what God is saying.

One of the first impulses we have when we sense God's calling upon our lives is to think that we need to make a drastic, radical shift at that very moment. Although it could happen that way, it doesn't necessarily need to. First, God touches our hearts and gains our commitment to His plan for our lives. A young boy might dream of being a soldier, but he still needs to grow up before he can wear that uniform. In the same way, we might have a great burden to serve the Lord full-time, but we often need to go through a lot of training before the Lord deploys us as full-time missionaries or pastors.



One of the greatest mistakes those who have received God's call to enter full-time ministry make is to think that Bible College or seminary is what qualifies them to serve the Lord. The Lord doesn't say that, even though most around us believe that formal training is necessary. We should remember that the Christian training institutions that we now have are a relatively modern invention-grown up along with our modern educational system. Although a seminary can prepare us in some ways, we do ourselves much harm when we equate this kind of training with the training that the Lord wants to provide for our lives.

The Lord's training is holistic; it involves each part of our lives. He is much more interested in building our faith than in any degree you might obtain. I remember when I was readying myself to go on my first short-term trip to Asia. I was excited and yet I realized that I didn't have money for the trip. Excitement would not get me to the mission field. Eventually, the mission called to see whether or not I had the money. Not much had come in. They suggested calling it off. But something in my heart was still hopeful so with a little persuasion they gave me two more days. Would you believe that God prompted someone to ask me how my preparation was going and then wonderfully took care of that need the very next day?

God is very interested in the process of how things work. He trains us through what otherwise would be mundane steps of life. Even today I am still encouraged as I remember how God intervened in that impossible situation.

Many times when we examine our calling in light of our present situation or qualifications, we get discouraged. There seems to be an insurmountable number of obstacles to prevent us from serving the Lord. Don't allow these circumstances to discourage you. Instead look at them as opportunities for God to prove His call on your life. God uses financial needs, parental objections, lack of opportunity, spousal disagreements, etc. to further train us. The Lord is in no hurry. If He were, then He would quickly eliminate the obstacles. Yes, men are perishing without Christ. The mission is urgent.

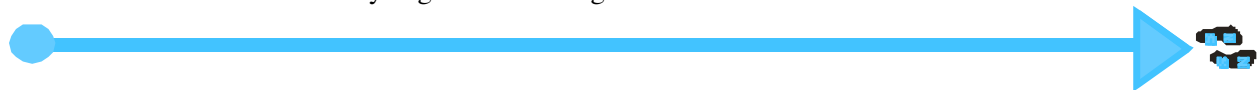
And yet, God wants to properly train us and will take the time necessary to carry out that training. If God is patient with the training process, then we should be too. In fact, pause a moment and tell the Lord right now that you are willing to wait however long He thinks best before entering full-time service. Consciously allow Him to lead you. Don't rush things. He may do things very quickly or he may choose to do them very slowly. The most important thing to do is to stay in learning mode. You are anticipating His training. His training is critical for effective service.

We hope this article broadens your understanding on how God might train you. Remember, God's training program never stops. Think of your training as an obstacle course. Although the evil one would want us to fail, God has given us just what we need to trust Him through all the obstacles that we will face in life. Just trace the Apostle Paul's life, and you will see that sometimes the training can even increase at the end of ones ministry!

Training for ministry is the training of our lives. It is true that a seminary degree is often the first qualification Christian organizations look for before you can join them. But God is more concerned with who we are than with what we know. He is more interested in the way that we trust Him than in what we have 'done for Him.' We tend to think that we are ready for service far earlier than He thinks so. Or in other words, we are much more ready for the training period to stop than He is. God's true graduation ceremony takes place when we step into His presence in heaven.



To be honest it is difficult for us to objectively judge where we are at in our own lives. We tend to focus on the areas in which we are doing well while ignoring areas in which we have struggles. It is helpful for us to look at our life through a timeline. We start with our birth and map out how God has dealt with us throughout our lives, trials and significant experiences. If God has called you into full-time service, then you can be sure that God has already entered you into His training school. It is encouraging to go back to see in what areas He has already begun His training.



God does not call His leaders out of nowhere. Like Moses and Joshua and the myriad of other servant leaders that He has called through the ages, they all have a background. They maybe young or old, but they all have sensed God significantly moving in their lives.

The more clearly we understand how God works in preparing us for the works He has called us to, the easier it is to observe what He has already done and what still needs to be worked on. But to be sure, our understanding of what God will do through our lives is often rather vague until we look back into history. We can trust God in His self-appointed role to train us. He uses many people, situations and His Word to

train us, but He ultimately is overseeing the process. We can fully trust Him in this process even if like Moses we need 80 years to get us to the point where He can use us.

We have designed two lists which will help you better understand the important areas of your life that God is most interested in. These are areas we should expect God's training. The closer we work with Him on these areas, the easier and smoother the training will go.

1. ***Starting Point*** is for those who are just beginning to think about God's call for their lives.
2. ***Pursuing Him*** is for those who have already started thinking and actively working along with God in this training process for full-time ministry. This second set of questions helps evaluate and enhance your preparations for full-time ministry.

We suggest that you get a long piece of paper out and begin to jot down your observations on a timeline. Then you will begin to see where you are going! If you have access to a computer, then download the file and insert your answers as you go. Other resources for equipping oneself for a godly ministry can be found at [Biblical Foundations for Freedom](http://www.biblicalfoundationsforfreedom.net).¹

¹ www.foundationsforfreedom.net

Starting Point

Discerning and Affirming God's 'Call' on Your Life to Full-time Ministry

If you have just started seriously considering full-time service, you are probably trying to think through the many implications it has on your life. We have supplied a number of questions to help you gain an overall understanding of your call and the general process of God's training program.

Clarifying the 'call':

- **What motivates you to want to go into full-time ministry?**
- **Is this a new desire or has it been longstanding?**
- **Where and when did it begin?**
- **Write down as clearly as you can what God's 'call' for you means.**



Seeking Direction:

- **Have you prayed and fasted to confirm and clarify God's leading for your life?**
- **What specific confirmations and clarifications regarding His will has He revealed to you?**
- **Have you discussed your God-given burden with your church leaders?**
- **What obstacles have you met up with?**

Parental blessing:

- **What do your parents think about your going into full-time ministry?**
- **What are their concerns? What might be behind those concerns?**

God speaks to us through our parents even when they are older or are non-Christians. They might not be able to fully understand what we are talking about, but it is important that we honor them by respecting their advice and taking it seriously.

Marital unity:

- **If married, does your spouse share your vision?**
- **Did you communicate your burden clearly with him or her?**

The husband and wife both need to share the same willingness to serve the Lord.

As a husband, have you loved your wife and built up your marriage so that she has the needed security and love to share your vision? If not, wait and further deepen your commitment to properly establish your marriage relationship. Your wife's eager participation is critical.

As a wife, have you discussed with your husband what his and your spiritual 'dreams' are? You need to pray and wait for God to fulfill them. Many times they are fulfilled only later in life. Meanwhile, discern how you can be a 'helpmate' to the way God is leading him.

Recognizing experiences:

- **Are you serving now? Where?**
- **List the actual ministries you are doing (planning, counseling, visiting, teaching, serving, etc.).**
- **List other ministries that you have participated in that are not listed above.**
- **What spiritual gifts have you used in the above ministries?**
- **What ministries do you like being involved in the most?**

Training of in God's Word:

- **Have you personally done any serious study of God's Word? List what it was and when it took place.**
- **Have you received discipleship training or mentoring from another? Again list when it took place and what level it was (e.g. beginners, growth/overcomer, or training).**
- **Have you taken any formal training programs? When did it occur? How did it help you?**

Your spiritual life with God:

- **Do you meet with the Lord daily in prayer and reflective reading of His Word?**
- **Are there days or times when you are not consistent? Why is this?**
- **Do you keep a spiritual journal about what He is saying to you?**

Formation of concrete plans towards the goal:

- **What steps have you taken so far toward serving full-time in ministry?**
- **Are there certain skills or degrees that are necessary for service in your area of interest?**
- **What barriers are between you and reaching that goal?**
- **About how much time do you expect is needed to reach that goal?**
- **What milestones have you already crossed?**

Do not be frustrated at 'closed' doors. Take the steps that you can. Pray about how to overcome those final barriers to reach that goal. Remember that God places those obstacles there to shape our own faith and give us opportunity to grow. It is our training.

Final Thought

We strongly suggest regularly keeping a spiritual journal that traces God's leading in your life. It is a place you can remember your calling. You can see how far God has brought you as well as stay focused on the challenges ahead. In any case, it is a time to be enjoyed. Look at it as a special time where He will be doing special things in and through your life. A calling is, after all, a special joint venture in which He has called you to work along with Him and promises to equip and use you in that work.



Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go to the Father. And whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it. If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. (John 14:12-14 NASB).

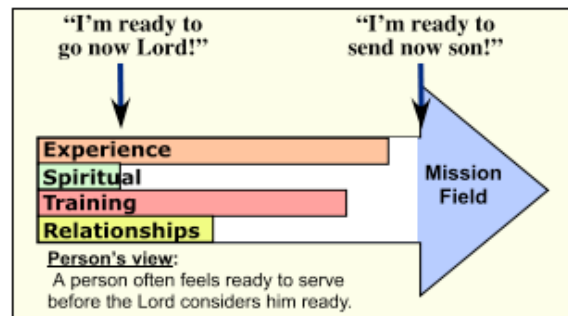
Pursuing Him

Understanding God’s Training Program for those in Ministry

Training for an effective full-time ministry never really stops. We constantly need to be readying our heart to rightly serve the Lord. We always have room to grow. *“You are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matthew 5:48)*. We need to attentively listen to the Lord for wisdom, courage, strength and endurance. God’s training program might look different after we have been serving the Lord for a while, but in many ways it is similar to what He has been doing. An effective leader is a life disciple (learner) of the Lord Jesus Christ. Once a disciple, always a disciple.

Training is important for those in service of the Lord. We might make a lot of difference between pre-training and post-training, but the Lord doesn’t. We never graduate from His school of training until we reach heaven’s shores. He shapes us so that we can bear more fruit. It behooves us to better understand how He trains us.

King Saul was one who resisted God’s training. He was qualified before man (tall, big and strong) but not before the Lord. In many cases the candidate considers himself qualified for service before God does. God, however, is the best appraiser of our strengths and weaknesses. There are numerous helps to evaluate a person’s qualifications for ministry but most of them fail. They are usually focused on graduation from a formal training program and the soundness of ones doctrine. In some situations they work, but today they often fail miserably. This is due mostly to the deterioration of the family and the resulting lack of personal character. It is compounded by the lack of ‘hands on’ training. God looked beyond David’s older and more mature brothers and chose the smallest boy out in the field shepherding because he had a heart after God.



We need to learn how to properly evaluate our qualifications for service. How do we do this? We must avoid the tendency to only look at what we know or have done. We need to focus on fruits from ministry, personal growth, and relationships within the church. Because of the emphasis on academic training, we tend to ask the wrong questions. Here are a few right questions.

Good Question	Bad Question
How do you show your love for God’s Word?	What do you know about God’s Word?
What spiritual fruit have you seen in your spiritual service? Be specific.	How do you feel about your past ministry?
Have you trained a new convert? How?	How long did you lead the youth group?
About how many times do you have friction with your spouse each week? From a scale of 1 to 10 (10=worse), rate those times.	How has your marriage been? How long have you been married?
Do you have tension with anyone in the church? If so, explain.	How long have you attended church there?

We want to provide you with a better understanding of God's full training program for your own lives. Although we could focus on specific qualities needed for service, we will here take a more strategic approach. We will observe four special areas of training that the person who aspires to go into missions needs to pay close attention to. This doesn't differ too much for those going into the pastorate except in the area of raising support.

1. **Experience/training:** Gaining all the skills and knowledge one needs to enter full-time ministry.
2. **Character/spiritual:** Acquiring the moral character and effective spiritual disciplines to maintain a close and intimate relationship with the Lord.
3. **Mission/support:** Making the proper contacts with a mission or denominational agency along with the raising of needed support (prayer and financial).
4. **Church relationships:** Carrying on good and proper relationships with those in ones home church and making sure clear communication is occurring.

If any area is neglected, then certain problems and misunderstandings develop. There is no doubt that these deficient areas would in time be exposed and cause damage in our ministries and lives. God wants to properly prepare us so that He can more effectively work through our lives. He didn't want Peter and the others to stumble and neither does He want us to fail. Effective training leads to long-term success.

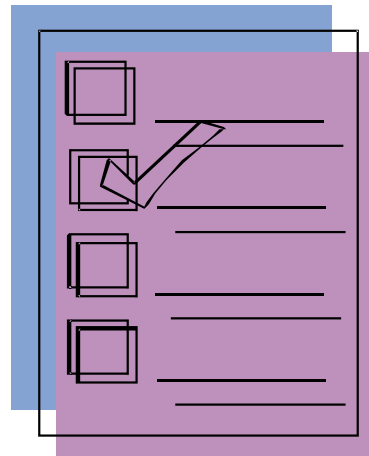
1) Experience/Training

Experience/training include all the skills and knowledge one needs to begin a ministry.

Today I just heard a missionary share how after seminary and being on the field for about seven years, that he still didn't know how to disciple and start churches. I'd venture to guess that this is not a rare problem.

The training that we need is often not what we receive. So in pursuing this area of training, we have stopped assuming that a seminary degree assures that the graduate has all the needed attitudes, moral qualities, skills and insight into God's Word that he might need to start an effective ministry. Instead we take another approach which asks what a person needs in a certain ministry situation to be effective.

Church Planter Needs:



If a person will be a church planter, for example, what does he need to know to properly start and grow a church? A whole list of skills presents itself including evangelizing and discipling. This is a good beginning but it still remains superficial. We need to think of evangelism in personal and public settings, with children and adults, with hostile people and cults. Acknowledging these specific contexts enables us to better evaluate whether we have had sufficient experiences and skill building opportunities to take on the challenges that we would meet up with in a different context. For example, taking a course or two on evangelism without the experience of personal evangelism is quite unsatisfactory.

Let me provide another example. We all know that we need a good knowledge of God's Word. However, we end up studying books about the Bible rather than studying the Word of God itself. God's people need to be convinced of the importance of communing with God through His Word and know how to do that. The Lord speaks through His Word to our hearts; He strengthens and prepares us. We see how Jesus conducted His ministry with God's Word always in mind. We need to do the same too. The practice of meditating on God's Word is critical for spiritual growth and effective service. Of course, different denominations or mission agencies still have their set of qualifications, and we are wise to consider them. But we must remember the Lord's qualifications for effective ministry.

Evaluating the needs of a potential ministry

Get a piece of paper and write down at the top what ministry you think the Lord might be leading you to. Be as specific as you can but don't be concerned if it is general like "cross-cultural missions." As you go through this exercise, you will begin to discern areas that you need more information.

On that paper write down all the skills, knowledge, attitudes and spiritual disciplines one needs to be effective in carrying on that ministry. This is a great exercise for those who are in seminary. Many students take expensive courses without ever thinking what special things the Lord wants to train them in through those courses. The list might be long. Don't let that stop you. Some of the suggestions might have to do with the area of ones personal character. That is fine. Just jot them down in that category.

The list will continually be updated and adjusted. We should read and talk to others to increase our understanding of what a certain position might require. For example, we might request an hour with a

cross-cultural missionary to learn more about what things he feels is important for effective ministry overseas. Do not just accept general answers. Ask how well prepared they were for a certain task and how they could have been better prepared. Carefully interweave that knowledge into your own list. We will discover that we are fairly well prepared in some areas but needing much more training in others.

This list will help you focus on what you need training in. It will also be your list of prayer requests. “God if you want me to serve those people, I need You to help me replace my anger with your kindness and patience.” Think of this list as God’s training list for you. Below are a number of categories each with their own questions. They can help you better discern what areas in which we need further training.

Ministry Skills

- **What ministry skills will you need in your first four years of service?**
- **What ministry skills have you gained through past experience?**
- **What ministry skills are you now lacking?**
- **What practical steps have you taken to acquire such skills?**
- **Do you know of anyone who has such skills or experience that you could learn from?**

Bible Knowledge

- **How many times have you read through the Bible?**
- **Have you learned and used the inductive Bible study method?**
- **What Bible books have you spent more than 10 hours studying and meditating on?**
- **About how many Bible verses have you memorized?**
- **Mediation is a key to successful ministry. In what ways have you brought meditation to be part of your own spiritual life?**

Business Skills (for those in tentmaking)

- **What qualifications do you have to serve?**
- **Are they accepted and esteemed by your possible host country?**
- **Are there special programs that might enhance your effectiveness?**
- **Have you figured a way to maximize your ‘free’ time to serve?**
- **What have you learned from others who are now doing what you hope to do?**

2) Character/Spiritual

Acquiring the moral character and proper spiritual disciplines needed to maintain a close relationship with the Lord and to have an effective ministry.

A person can learn a lot about how to carry on different ministries but be totally unprepared in their lives. Perhaps you have met some skilled people who have a poor marriage, worry, don't seek the Lord in prayer or have an unresolved problem with lust. These personal flaws have and will be used of the evil one to ultimately destroy a person's ministry.

The Bible speaks a lot about the personal growth of a Christian with little emphasis on skills. Much is said about being filled with the Holy Spirit and nothing of gaining a certain degree. This is, I believe, because without this personal moral foundation, the ministry has no meaning. How sad to see missionaries that have poor marriages, lust problems or relational difficulties with other missionaries. Their ministry is discredited by their lives.

There is both the initial obtaining of a Christ-filled life and then the maintaining of it. We will focus on the first aspect of gaining moral character. Remember that our greatest task will be to discover problems that we did not think we had. It is critical that we have an eager, humble heart to serve the Lord and allow Him to expose those areas.

Personal character development:

- **In what areas of your life has God caused significantly growth?**
- **How has God helped you grow in those areas?**
- **Name the three areas of character development that are most needed in your life.**
- **Ask a good friend (such as a spouse) the same question.**
- **Formulate a plan to work on each of them. Use a spiritual journal to keep track of your progress.**

Intimacy with God:

- **How much time do you spend with the Lord each day in prayer?**
- **How much time do you think you should spend?**
- **Do you look forward to your times with Him?**
- **What level of priority is it that you meet the Lord each day? How do you know?**
- **How do you respond when devotional times are not so exciting?**

Bible knowledge is not the same as closeness with God. Prayer time can be religious and not profitable. Time spent is not the same thing as 'good time spent.' Without spiritual habits built into our lives before full-time ministry, we more likely will not have them afterwards. Many think that the Christian ministry allows more time for God. But in fact, the opposite is true. Many a busy missionary or pastor has been 'burned out' simply because they got too busy to meet with God.

Issues in marriage:

The way we treat our spouse in a great way reflects how we approach the Lord. Marriage problems are significant and must be worked on. God has solutions. He wants a husband and wife to be intimate. He doesn't want them to argue but discuss and seek His face together.

- **On a scale of 1 to 10 (best), rate your marriage. Afterwards ask your spouse to do the same.**
- **List any issues that you disagree upon. How do you solve these disagreements?**
- **Do you burst out in anger to get your way?**
- **If you have a quarrel, do you restore the relationship? Do you know how to restore the relationship? How long does it take you?**
- **Do you tolerate bitterness or resentment in your heart toward each other? If so, you need to master forgiveness (this is the heart of the gospel – grace).**
- **As a husband have you learned to devote yourself to caring for your wife? How do you know?**
- **As a wife, have you learned how to submit to your husband or do you still resent his decisions?**
- **Are you content with your spouse?**

Issues in single living:

Marriage offers a special training place that singles do not have. If you are single, however, you can get a glimpse into your heart by noticing how you relate to your parents. A single person is tested by how he relates to and respects his parents or others in authority.

- **As a young person do you humble your will to do what your parents say? How do you respond to them when you disagree with them? Can you trust God with their judgments?**
- **As a single woman do you quietly submit your will to your parents?**
- **Have you worked through your singleness with God? Are you content with what God provides?**
- **Do you get a little resentful when you see young couples or families with little children?**
- **Have you learned to control your sexual desires?**

Parenting:

Many parents do not believe that they can godly raise children with proper attitudes. They allow modern techniques to substitute for biblical instructions. Note how an elder must keep *“his children under control with all dignity”* (1 Timothy 3:4). The key to an effective family ministry, both in term of time and witness, is to train your children to obey.

- **Do your children obey you? (How many times do you have to tell them to do something?)**
- **Do you have a good relationship with your children?**
- **How often do you pray and study God's Word with your children?**
- **What means do you utilize to reconcile your children when in conflict? Does it include apologizing and forgiving?**
- **Do other people like being with your children?**

3) Mission/Support

Making the proper contacts with a mission or denominational agency along with the raising of needed support base (prayer and financial).

If one is planning to go into full-time ministry, whether it is the mission field or the pastorate, there are certain steps to take. If the process is not well understood, then certain decisions could lead to delays. Fortunately, mission agencies do well in helping their potential candidates understand this process. Unfortunately candidates most often do not speak specifically enough or start early enough in the process.

The process is obvious to some. Others, usually due to a poor church background, have no clue to the process. This is the way it was with me when God called me during my freshman year at university. God could and did lead me, but it would have been so much easier if someone gave me an overview of the process. Let's try to do that here.

Steps to Serving	Explanations
A call to full-time ministry	God gives you an inward sense of call to serve Him. (This of course could be earlier or later on).
Affirmation by others	Others will see how God is using you and will encourage you to serve more.
Recognition by church leaders	Church leaders will give you increased responsibilities in the church.
Personal growth and increased service	You will respond to these matters by continually growing closer to the Lord and taking opportunities to serve.
Suggestion for further training	Often (unfortunately) the church will suggest you study at some school for full-time ministry. Ideally they should first train you as much as they can in the local church.
Specialized training	Usually formal seminary or Bible school training is required but other less expensive training programs are possible with proper oversight and deployment. ²
Link up	Link up with the right mission or service organization.
Internship, first ministry	Hopefully received with a good mentorship.
Deputation	Raise support for full-time mission or specialized ministry. Pay off loans. Confirm home church. Ordination. ³
Appointment	They will need a designated place to serve with a special ministry in mind.

² In the Western world, if one serves outside his local church, it is almost impossible to proceed without expensive and formal specialized training. On the other hand, world missions require better, more flexible and far less expensive training programs.

³ We suggest ordination should follow a testing of ministry rather than precede it.

Here are some more specific questions you can ask yourself to help you better prepare for service.

Seek home church support and confirmation for this direction:

- **Have you talked to your church/pastor about your desire to minister full-time?**
- **Has the church set time aside to discuss this 'call' with you?**
- **Has the church asked you to be responsible for any ministry?**
- **Have you faithfully carried it out? Do they think so?**
- **Has the church discussed further training at all?**

Pay off all loans as soon off as possible:

- **Which loans or financial obligations do you have?**
- **Have you developed a concrete plan to pay these loans off before ministry?**
- **If so, evaluate how you have been doing. How can you do better?**
- **If not, develop a plan with needed guidelines to help you minimize this time of waiting.**

Contact potential mission organizations and seminary trainings:

- **What potential missionary organizations/training institutes have you contacted?**
- **If so, what is it that you liked or disliked about the different organizations?**
- **What were their specific suggestions? Have you carried any of them out?**
- **Have you followed up any conversation with any organization?**

Research potential training programs at a seminary or elsewhere:

- **What kind of training does the mission organization require?**
- **What kind of training does your anticipated area of service require?**
- **Have you looked into seminaries or other kinds of training?**
- **What do you want to gain from formal training?**

We recommend that you spend a good bit of time thinking about what you want from a training program. Much time and money is spent here. The goals of the institution are rarely the goals that you have. Remember that God's training always requires shaping of one's character, knowledge of God through his Word as well as providing skills and other knowledge.

4) Church Relationships

Carrying on good and proper relationships with those in ones home church and making sure clear communication is occurring.

Something is drastically wrong with our training. Many churches are filled with divisive people and focus on politics rather than on following the Lord. Others have experienced an actual church split. You are rare if you do not know of such a church. The Lord wants to train up leaders like Jesus that were bold but tender to Him. The modern spirit of individualism often prevents us from knowing how to wait upon God when tension arises with those in authority over us.

Part of the problem is that we do not realize that how we relate to those in authority over us is how we relate to the Lord and carry out an effective ministry. Because we move around so much, we can easily avoid 'conflict' until we are out in the mission field! That is a mistake.

The Lord is very interested in training us in this area. Let's try to simply introduce this training process and then follow through with some questions to help you think through the way you relate to others.

Our hearts are tested by the relationships around us. Training in how to carry on good relationships should happen in the family in or growing up years. In these most recent generations many are not receiving this training. Many of us simply do not know how to biblically (rightly) respect authority and care for those under our charge.

The church is a good place to learn these things too. This happens, for example, when we know there is a better way to do something. Do you then 'follow' that elder's advice? Do you treat your opinion as equal to the one who is in authority? As we respect our leaders, then we can learn from them. When we can learn from them, then they will encourage us to excel and enter into ministry. If we insist on doing it our own way, then we will find relationships in the church quite strained. You will be tempted to speak against your leaders.

The scriptures tell us to honor our elders. The way we respond to our elders gives us a good picture of our humility or pride or lack thereof. We need to be willing to trust the Lord with our great dreams and plans in the face of what we might think is some dull scheme. This is the time we need to wait upon the Lord and seek Him about how to do His ministry. He will amazingly open doors for us.

Respecting your elders:

- **Do you attend the church business meetings? How come they hold them this way?**
- **Have you ever sat in at an elder, deacon or coworker's meeting? What did you think?**
- **How do you respond when you believe you have a better way of doing something?**
- **What if the church leaders ask you to handle some smaller task? How do you respond?⁴**
- **Do you value the church leaders' guidance? What makes you so sure of this?**

⁴ I remember seeing one young person be so zealous caring for a 'small' church job that everyone saw potential in him for serving in other 'big' ministry areas of the church.

Communicating well with your leaders:

- **How well do you know your church leaders? List them and pray for them regularly.**
- **What concrete ways have you used to get to know them better? Make some more plans.**
- **Have you communicated to your church leaders how God has been working in your heart?**
- **How do they respond to your interest in missions or other full-time service?**
Are they hesitant? Move too slowly? Disagree with you? Affirm you? What is your response? Why?
- **Have you asked them in what areas you could be better trained? Ask and learn from them!**

Seek accountability and mentorship to keep the vision clear:

- **Have you ever been mentored by anyone?**
- **Is someone now mentoring you who knows your burden for ministry? Have you shared your whole vision with them?**
- **Have you shared with him/her the different obstacles you face to reach that goal? Set out a plan and see which area they could help you in.**

Summary

The most effective minister is the one who does not focus on completing certain qualifications for the ministry, but one that persistently pursues the Lord throughout his life. Persistent pursuit of the Lord is necessary because of our sinful heart, forgetfulness and temptations that we meet. Seeking the Lord is also needed because of the nature of our relationship with God.

Moses saw the burning bush at the beginning of His ministry but that was not sufficient to sustain Him throughout his service to the Lord. He knew that there was much more to knowing God and spent His life pursuing a deeper relationship with Him (Exodus 33:13-14). An effective ministry is built on a deepening relationship with our gracious God. Jesus said this same thing.

*I am the vine, you are the branches;
he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit;
for apart from Me you can do nothing.
(John 15:5 NASB)*

Therefore preparing ourselves for effective ministry is an ongoing task. There are standards and qualifications to meet, but fruitful ministry flows from an ongoing relationship with God through Christ. Each of the four general areas that were mentioned above assists us to keep growing in that relationship with God. Acquiring skills is learning how to do things God's way. Character building has to do with developing a more holy life so that we can be closer to God and closely listen to Him. Proper contacts remind us of the broader context in which God works through His whole body. Proper relationships enable us to thoroughly enjoy working with others through Christ's love.

How exciting it is to realize that the call to serve Him is also an invitation to know Him more!