



# Facing & Overcoming Missionary Challenges

Midwest Conference on Missionary Care

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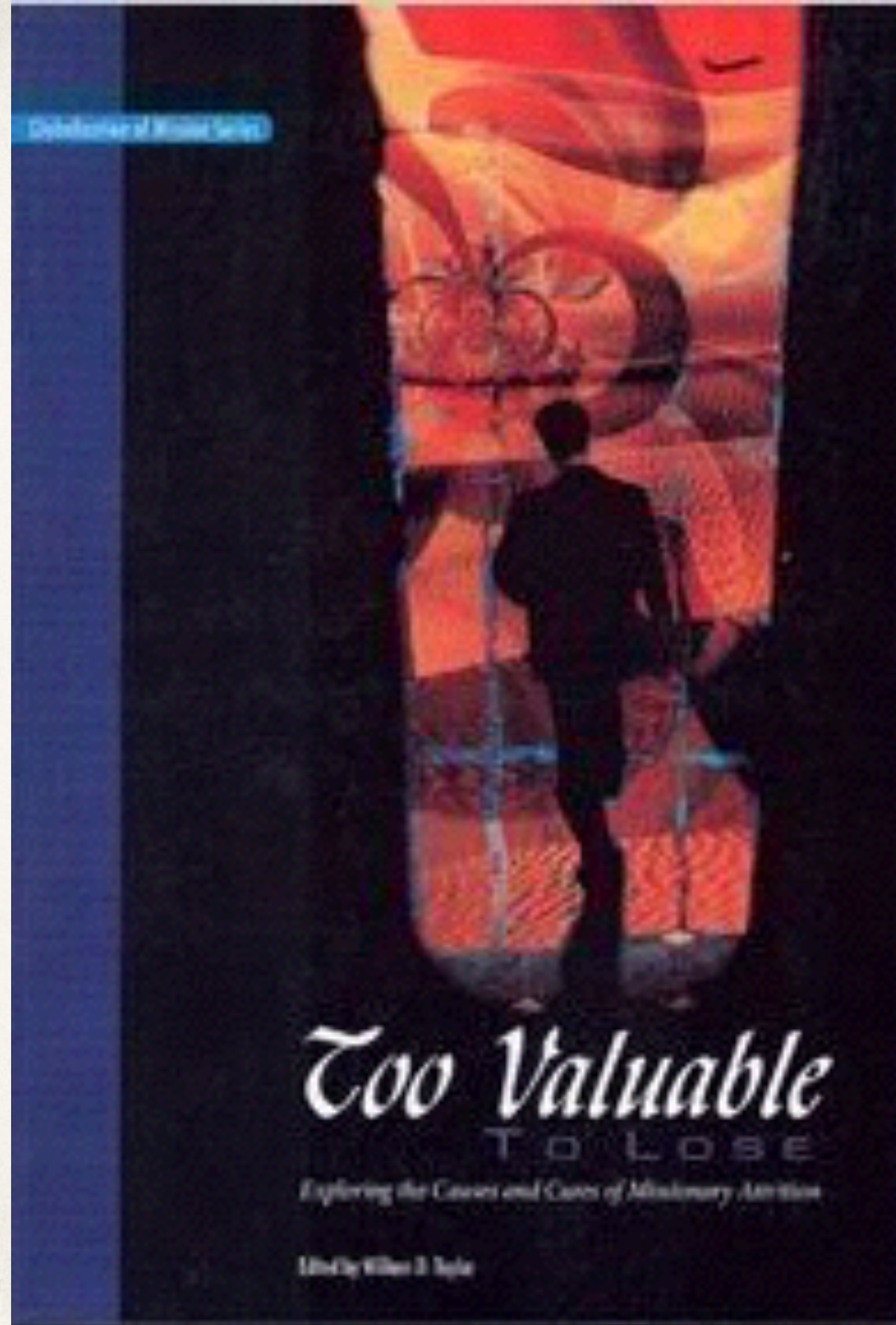
*February 2017*



# Missionary Attrition

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- ❖ This year more than 7000 missionaries will quit.
- ❖ Nearly 1/2 of these who have managed only one term on the field
- ❖ Estimated that 20 missionaries will pull the plug today
- ❖ Every 15 minutes one decides to throw in the towel
- ❖ Many of these who quit are lost not only to the cause of missions, but to their faith
- ❖ However...50%-70% of those lost are preventable!





# Challenges that “M’s” Face

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- ❖ Cross-cultural stress - language learning
- ❖ Transition of all kinds
- ❖ Living in a fishbowl
- ❖ Family Pressures
- ❖ Overworked
- ❖ Needs everywhere
- ❖ Moral issues





# Challenges that “M’s” Face

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- ❖ Health Crisis
- ❖ Interpersonal Conflict
- ❖ Persecution
- ❖ Natural Disaster
- ❖ Personal Trauma
- ❖ Violence (Crime, Coup, etc)





# Grief & Loss

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- ❖ What are some of the losses that missionaries experience?
  - ❖ Goodbyes / Transition / Relocation
  - ❖ Loss of dreams, hopes & plans (Unmet expectations)
  - ❖ Loss of image, loss of status
  - ❖ Loss of relationships
  - ❖ Physical death

# Grief & Loss - How can we help?

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- ❖ Talk with missionary candidates about grief/loss and do some in-house training
- ❖ Talk with missionaries about contingency planning, determine what role the church will have versus agency.
- ❖ Follow closely with missionaries on the field any losses they may experience...be willing to provide some debriefing for workers going through grief/loss.
- ❖ Provide guidance, advice and financial assistance if needed; encouraging words
- ❖ Offer annual sabbath retreats for field workers; encourage & monitor sabbath practices; provide a place of rest
- ❖ Provide opportunities for reentry debriefing...become a safe place for your workers
- ❖ Provide presence



# Conflict

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- ❖ What aspects of our lives tend to breakdown when we experience conflict?
- ❖ What do you sense are some of the common causes for conflict for missionaries on the field?

# Conflict - How can we help?

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- ❖ Provide team building training prior to departure; trust building; conflict resolution training
- ❖ Help your worker know their personal style of conflict management; awareness; what is their language of conflict; specifically in marriages
- ❖ More emphasis on people and less on task
- ❖ Seek openness in communication and clarity with your workers
- ❖ Journey with your missionaries in their character development (Intentional growth)
- ❖ Serve as a mentor with someone who is dealing with conflict on the field
- ❖ Send a mediation team if necessary
- ❖ Foster good communication and embrace forgiveness
- ❖ Become a safe church
- ❖ Pray



# Moral Dilemmas

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- ❖ We live in a sinful world...missionaries are not exempt from it...they are living in the midst of it.
- ❖ Moral failures do happen within missions
- ❖ No one and no organization is exempt from the possibility



# Moral Dilemmas - How can we help?

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- ❖ Church can provide teaching on moral issues as part of their church ethos...intentional Biblical teaching/guidance
- ❖ Be slow to judge and quick to offer grace
- ❖ Shepherd workers through moral issues...walk with them
- ❖ Mentoring/Coaching could be a big help
- ❖ Build relationships of trust & promote an atmosphere of growth
- ❖ Be vulnerable with your own struggles
- ❖ Ask probing questions...appropriately.
- ❖ Know God's Word yourself
- ❖ Protect Confidentiality
- ❖ Provide space for confession, forgiveness & restorative process



# Resources

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- ❖ Healthy, Resilient, & Effective in Cross-Cultural Ministry, Dr. Laura Mae Gardner
- ❖ Tender Care, Barnabas International
- ❖ Neal Pirlo - Serving as Senders & The Reentry Team
- ❖ Helping Your Missionaries Thrive - Harder & Foote
- ❖ While Shepherds Watch Their Flocks - Dr. Tim Laniak
- ❖ Tending Scattered Wool Blog - Scott Shaum -<https://tendingscatteredwool.com>