

FOUR SEASONS OF SOUL CARE FOR MISSION WORKERS

2016 MIDWEST CONFERENCE ON MISSIONARY CARE

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- ✓ 1- Central Issues and Challenges of the Season
- ✓ 2- Implication Issues have on Pastoral and Soul Care
- ✓ 3- Possible Responses of Member Caregivers

SPRING: Pre-Field and New Arrival to Field

key words: beginnings, discovery, launching, major transition

Issues and Challenges

- ▶ New beginning as a worker, new commitment to agency, raise funds first time, “firsts”
- ▶ Moving, good byes, closure,
- ▶ Learn a new culture or language, new relationships, teammates, agency, local people,
- ▶ Steep learning curve home culture and abroad
- ▶ Re-settling, good and bad days but...
- ▶ Everything exciting, fun, adventure, discovery

Pastoral and Soul Care

- Emotional Upheaval of ups and downs, hellos and goodbyes, highs and lows
- Transition and change
- Doubts, fears, failures, calling uncertainty
- Insecurity and identity issues
- Exhaustion

Member Care Giver Response

- ❖ Steadfast love of the Father, unfailing love
- ❖ God who never changes
- ❖ Biblical success and failure: faithfulness not “shoulds and musts”
- ❖ Identity in Christ, who God says we are, position and place in Christ (Eph 2:6-7)
- ❖ Sabbath, rest, stillness of the soul, pleasure of God

SUMMER: First Term: Year 1-2-maybe 3

Key Words: exploring, intensity, practicing, establishing, rooting

Issues and Challenges

- ▶ MOST Critical season in a Mission Worker’s Career- foundation
- ▶ Honeymoon- especially 4-6 months, adventure, novel, full of life, high energy, new relationships
- ▶ 6-12 months impatience, weary, critical,
- ▶ 1 year break point, illogical anger, no capacity to tolerate, crisis point of adjustment and acceptance- 3 weeks to 2 months of wrestling and readjusting

- ▶ 2 year crash again but even harder: metamorphous process
confusion, pain...
- ▶ Workers tend to slip into isolation/distancing to sort self and culture
- ▶ By end year 2 into 3, find niche, peace with the language, acceptance by locals

Pastoral and Soul Care

- Radical transformation, change process
Refiner's fire realities and pains
- Intense discipleship,
- Intimacy in Christ
- Identity and Belonging- deeper level than summer
- Fear future
- Incompetence, weakness
- Exhaustion

Member Care Giver Response

- ❖ Listen well, giving permission for them to be honest, no fixing or solving
- ❖ Refiner's fire, potter and the clay, John 15, pruning, abiding in Christ,
- ❖ Intimacy/Heart of God: King David intimacy, depth, Mary- prayer to be His servant, Hannah's prayer- intimate prayers , Psalm 139- known intimately by the Creator
- ❖ Discipleship Issues: Follow me, take up his cross daily follow me, deny self, die, Christ, "not my will but thine be done"
- ❖ Grief and Loss: losing parts of you, by choice to gain a new culture. Willful but still painful and is a legitimate grieving process
- ❖ Identity in Christ- Belonging both personally and the Body
- ❖ Life through the Spirit, doing vs. being
- ❖ Sabbath, rest and stillness

FALL: Mid-career- established- years 4 to 10-15- 20

Key words: thriving, designing, expanding, training, perfecting

Issues and Challenges

- ▶ Steady, stable, routine, cultural rhythm and enjoyment, family patterns, set roles
- ▶ Satisfying community in team and national church
- ▶ Productive, activity, fruit begins to emerge
- ▶ Confident, initiating, highly relational, credibility
- ▶ Security, identity stability
- ▶ Busy, opportunity rich, visioning and dreaming, creating, developing, multiplying, training
- ▶ Decisions, options, professional development

Pastoral and Soul Care

- Guidance and discernment, God's will, counsel and wisdom
- Transitions as children age, teammates and roles shift
- Personal and professional development not just culture and language
- Intimacy in Christ, renewal,

- Need, desire for spiritual rhythms, disciplines
- Rest, refreshment, Sabbath

Member Caregiver Response

- ❖ Listening to God, hearing from God, prayer and meditation- encouraging day and weekend retreats, time away
- ❖ Spiritual gifting, re-evaluating, assessing, reflecting,
- ❖ Spiritual Rhythm, disciplines, new practices
- ❖ Self-care, resiliency, stress management
- ❖ Sabbath rest and stillness, retreating

WINTER: Exit field and Re-entry

Key words: relishing, reflecting releasing, reconciling, returning, re-adjust

Issues and Challenges

- ▶ Retirement
- ▶ Relinquish ministry; profound questions; Can we let go? , will the work continue? Who do we succeed to?
- ▶ Transition yet again; conclusion of one culture and re-entry passport culture
- ▶ Closure and goodbyes
- ▶ Evaluation, reflection and affirmation
- ▶ Uncertainty, fear of future mingled with new dreams new beginnings

Pastoral and Soul Care

- Grieving and Celebration
- Early return: circumstances determine if guilt, forgiveness, injustice, suffering
- Transition issues, identity shift again
- Need for community, belonging
- Unknown future: soul restlessness, fear/anxiety, need for peace
- Exhaustion or burnout

Member Care Giver Response

- ❖ Closure in field culture, good endings
- ❖ Forgiveness, reconciliation, theology suffering
- ❖ Gains and Losses- Celebrate gains, grieve losses
- ❖ Debriefing- reflection, processing, individual/group
- ❖ Trusting and guidance for future, mentors, counsel
- ❖ Affirmation and assurance from the Father, “well done good and faithful servant”
- ❖ Sabbath and rest, delight of the Father