

**Prepared Just Enough to be Dangerous**  
*The Mid-Termers Guide to Mission*

**Mark Crocker**

## Prepared Just Enough to be Dangerous: The Mid-Termers Guide to Mission

Copyright © 2009 Mark Crocker  
All Rights Reserved  
Printed in Canada

ISBN:

---

Published by:

This book or parts thereof may not be reproduced in any form without written permission of the author.

Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are taken from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright 1996, 2004. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, Illinois 60189. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked MSG are taken from *The Message*. Copyright 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 2000, 2001, 2002. Used by permission of NavPress Publishing Group.

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <b>FORWARD</b>  | <b>5</b>  |
| <b>INTRODUCTION TO A MID-TERMERS GUIDE TO MISSION</b>       | <b>5</b>  |
| <b>The Short Term Missions Model</b>                        | <b>6</b>  |
| <b>Some People Prepare Just Enough to be Dangerous</b>      | <b>8</b>  |
| <b>A. Preparing to Leave: What to Bring</b>                 | <b>11</b> |
| a) Stage One: Have You Prepared Just Enough to be Dangerous | 12        |
| b) Do I Pack Sweaters or Flip-Flops?                        | 14        |
| c) Motive Mix   | 16        |
| d) Who Are You Going With                                   | 18        |
| e) The Depth of your Experience                             | 20        |
| f) Why am I going – Your Worldview                          | 21        |
| g) Packing the Inside                                       | 22        |
| h) Tell Me A Story  | 29        |
| i) Safety and security concerns                             | 35        |
| j) Who You Are Going Without                                | 39        |
| k) Destination Study  | 42        |
| l) A Year in the Life of a Temporary Nomad.                 | 44        |
| <b>B. Starting: Excitement and Enthusiasm</b>               | <b>48</b> |
| a) Stage One: At the End of Day One.                        | 48        |
| b) Approaching the ‘Others’                                 | 51        |
| c) The first Three Days                                     | 55        |
| d) Crazyglue – Bonding Together                             | 57        |
| e) An Open Mouth  | 60        |
| f) Ooday ouyay eakspay ethay anguagelay?                    | 62        |
| g) Exposure to the Work                                     | 64        |
| h) Water to a Fish  | 67        |
| <b>C. Staying: The Second Quarter – Rejection</b>           | <b>69</b> |
| a) Stage One: Rejecting the Bribe                           | 70        |
| b) Losing Your Identity                                     | 74        |
| c) Regarding Moral Issues                                   | 75        |
| d) Damaging Returns   | 76        |
| e) A Closed Mouth   | 79        |
| f) Flies in the Ointment                                    | 84        |
| g) Community Life - Colleagues                              | 86        |
| h) Community Life - Leaders                                 | 89        |
| i) Community Life – Cross-Cultural Complications            | 91        |
| j) Suddenly Significant Others                              | 93        |
| k) Positive Stereotyping                                    | 99        |

|  |            |
|--|------------|
| <b>D. Schooling: The Third Quarter – Emptying and Relearning</b> | <b>102</b> |
| a) Stage One: The Mission of the Kingdom                         | 102        |
| b) Anticipation or Expectation                                   | 106        |
| c) Burning the Newfoundland Flag                                 | 109        |
| d) Stop Stereotyping!  | 110        |
| e) The Right Word at the Right Time.                             | 113        |
| f) Engaging Fully  | 119        |
| g) Super-Missionary to the Rescue!                               | 121        |
| h) When Partnership Isn't  | 127        |
| <br>   |            |
| <b>E. Succeeding: Finishing Strong - Acceptance</b>              | <b>132</b> |
| a) Stage One - The "Right" Roots of Belief                       | 135        |
| b) Fixing Others or Fixing Ourselves                             | 139        |
| c) Partnering With Equals  | 145        |
| d) Poverty and the Temptation of Generosity                      | 149        |
| e) Negotiating a Relief or Development Partnerships              | 153        |
| f) The Worldview Why   | 158        |
| g) Christianity in the World of Worldviews                       | 168        |
| h) Accepting the worldview of others                             | 170        |
| <br>   |            |
| <b>F. Returning home</b>   | <b>174</b> |
| a) Stage One: Reentry shock                                      | 175        |
| b) Many Frustrating Returns                                      | 178        |
| c) Re-Entry: the emotional rollercoaster                         | 179        |
| d) Common Re-Entry Stressors                                     | 181        |
| e) Evaluating The Experience                                     | 184        |
| f) Three Re-Entry Results:                                       | 190        |
| g) Six Final Words: Closure                                      | 193        |
| h) Losing your language – the difficulty of sharing your story   | 194        |
| i) Planning for the Future – Now What?                           | 198        |
| <br>   |            |
| <b>ADDENDUM</b>  | <b>202</b> |
| 1. Grandparent Exercise  | 202        |
| 2. Hard Skill Inventory  | 23         |
| 3. Transferable Skills Inventory                                 | 25         |
| 4. Personality Skills Inventory                                  | 28         |
| 5. Case Studies  | 204        |
| 6. Host Evaluation and Assessment of Mid-Termer                  | 208        |

# Forward

## Introduction to the Mid-Termers Guide to Mission

Many thousands of people have now participated in one form of Short-Term Mission or another, for some of these individuals a spark has been set into tinder, their participation has meant that they are ready to consider further extended cross-cultural engagement. The plans are varied: some people are investigating whether or not they want to consider long-term mission, some are simply travelers seeking the adventure of travel, others are hoping to visit overseas friends, many participants are in the middle of a change in life and are looking for the next steps.

Although the classic definition of a Short-Term Missionary involves anyone in mission for two years or less, today it is more common for people to define Short-Term Missions as two or three week guided trips by small teams. Following the experience of a Short-Term team-based mission, there are often individuals who are interested in pursuing further missions opportunities. They may get in touch with their hosts, inquiring about the possibility of return and further volunteering.

For the purposes of distinction between Short Term Missions, which tend to focus on teams engaging in international work for approximately 2-4 weeks, and Long-Term Missionaries, who plan to 'start-over' in the host culture; I have termed these individuals, "Mid-Termers". Most Mid-Termers tend to volunteer for an approximate time of one month to one year, are self-supported financially, and work in a support role to a present missionary or other host.

These new 'Mid-Termers' are often highly motivated and dramatically untrained, their desire quickly outstrips their experience. Conversations with hosts have lead to mixed reviews. Some feel that Mid-Term Missionaries (MTM) bring some benefit to their hosts, while others are concerned that they are merely a difficult addition to the host's already considerable duties. In most cases there is miscommunication of expectations and misunderstandings from both sides, expectations for preparation is low. In fact, both the MTM as well as the host is often unaware of for what, or how they should prepare to work with one another.

This book, speaking specifically into the Canadian context, attempts to develop a process by which the Mid-Term Missionary can spend appropriate and valuable time in preparation prior to departure, personal growth while on the field, and reflective and encouraging debriefing upon return.

*Mark Crocker.*

## ***The Short Term Missions Model***

Our Short-Term intercultural relationships have often been likened to a “one way street mentality”, where our systems are set up in order to deliver goods and people to those poor people over there ... those that need our help. Short-Term inexperience does not have the historical or practical understanding of this difficult reality.

This may create a subtle (and not so subtle) sense of superiority. We bring the resources, you provide the manpower, statistics and receipts. This may breed a newer, gentler paternalism. Unfortunately a rescuer mentality will always require a victim. A rescuer mindset will often need to keep the rescued in a role that requires assistance. This subtle interplay cannot help but strengthen as dependency is birthed, solidifying the need of the rescued to continue to depend on the rescuer.

The foundations are shifting. Former missional structures and methods are no longer as accepted as they once were. Yet these new approaches, far from forgetting the past, embrace our true need for one another in Christ. Significant shifts in Mission have generally arrived from three perspectives:

1. For too long, **partnerships** have often been financial exchanges more than actual relationships. Partner agencies take the resources that we send to accomplish the work of Christ in the World. It is our contention that partnership is more than financing and receipting, fundraising and reporting.

Freed from the need to appear as experts (lone professional doctors), we are able to participate with others, accepting the contributions of our partners. We do not go to serve those poor people, we go to join those rich in the kingdom of heaven.

2. The attempt to remove the false split between **social justice and evangelism** has also meant a change in method. Rather than choosing sides or seeing ourselves as fitting somewhere along the social justice and evangelism continuum, we see both sides of this same coin.

Social justice is evangelism. Acts of justice teach what the kingdom of God looks like. Evangelism without care, without bringing up the level of capacity and ability, fails to reveal the depth of justice in the kingdom of God. This kingdom of love and concern for others is not an either-or proposition that only relates to social justice in the present nor only to salvation in the future, the music that God is singing is wider and all-pervasive.

3. There is hardly a Canadian young person alive today who has not been somewhere far from home. At one time, global travel was restricted to the very privileged and very rich. Today the **ease of worldwide travel** is well within reach of the average Canadian college student. This has led to a remarkable shrinking of the globe. Even as recent as 100 years ago it was common for a missionary to take about a month to travel to their exotic overseas destination, today that month is approximately how long most short-term missions opportunities last entirely.

In short, these three fairly recent value changes have helped promote the sharp increase in the Short Term Missions (STM) movement around the world as one of the standard approaches by which the church relates to the world. This experiment has resulted in an incredible explosion of global awareness, bringing the poor and wealthy of the world to sit and talk around the same table. Without question, this increase in missional awareness has resulted in a better global understanding, clean water initiatives to help the poor, spiritual transformation for communities, as well as set up thousands of individuals to join the mission of God for the rest of their lives.

Yet this story has also not been all peaches and roses. At times ineffective teams can work great damage to the character of God as they arrive internationally with cultural blinders, naïve or dangerous practices, and a close-minded misunderstanding of the unique and strange methods of Christ around the world.

While the jury is still out in terms of the final effect of the Short Term Mission worldview, in the meantime this methodology has deeply impacted the way that churches now look at missions. Where once the responsibility lay with arms-length agencies, churches are now proactively working to personally engage in Missions initiatives around the world. This document is both a reactive response to these realities, as well as a proactive attempt to direct people into best practices in this great adventure.

**We value Short Term Missions (STM) that embraces culturally relevant expressions of the Mission of God expressed through social justice and evangelism.**

## ***Some People Prepare Just Enough to be Dangerous***

So you want to go! Congratulations on taking the next step. Wrestling with the initial idea of going to work 'on the mission field' is difficult enough, the rest should be easy ... shouldn't it? The truth is - if you hope to engage with your host culture at a deeper level than your average tourist - you are going to find many more wrestling matches ahead.

Your intention to spend some extended time in international work is probably not a step you have taken lightly; you may already be familiar with some areas of cross-cultural preparation. Chances are good you have already spent some time on the field in one capacity or another. You may have been involved in your church missions program, a YWAM team, or perhaps a relative or a family friend is on the field and has invited you to come join them.

It is possible that you do not have any prior missions experience or expertise at all, you may be overwhelmed at this point - wondering if you are doing the right thing. Whatever the circumstances are that have brought you to this place, we trust that the next steps will be interesting and instructive as you prepare to go.

### **Who This is For.**

In preparing this document we have attempted to describe the person most likely to need this information. If we know who would probably participate in this process, we may better fit the process. Here are two descriptions of the individuals that this information is written for.

- *Robert is a young university student of twenty-two. After backpacking around Europe for a couple of months last summer, Robert has recently taken some Spanish history and language courses. Robert is surprised to discover just how interested he has become in intercultural work, perhaps even as a career. Last month he heard the story of a mission agency in South Africa and their work with HIV/AIDS orphans. He wants to participate. Although Robert is not really sure about what he could do, he is quite sure that he is not interested in traditional missions. This year he hopes to spend time in a South African community just to find out what this might mean for his life.*
- *Marie-Anne is professional dentist by trade. Her successful practice has kept her busy for many years. In the past Marie-Anne has occasionally traveled on a couple of resort packages, but recently she has also enjoyed a couple three-week trips with a missions team into Honduras. There she helped support the missionary, gave free dental exams, and shared her testimony with many of the village women. She loved the spiritual connection the most and now feels called back to this Central American nation. Marie-Anne has recently found herself single, her two children are settled into university and now in her mid fifties she feels like some new possibilities for her life are about to break open.*

As you read through the previous bios, you may feel that either Robert and Marie-Anne may have described your situation, on the other hand they may both seem very different than your personal situation. In either case, the point is simply this, at first glance the person(s) engaging in MTM could not be a more diverse bunch. For each person who plan to go, there are even more destinations, areas of expertise and plans. Yet, if we look beyond the descriptions of differences between Robert, Marie-Anne and Yourself, there are some particular similarities to consider. Like Robert and Marie-Anne, Mid-Termers often are:

- **Paying volunteers** - Some participants are completely dependant on the support of friends or family, others use personal resources to fund their international travel. Yet in both cases the participants are similar – they are not employed by an agency, they are self-supporting.
- **Non-theologically trained/faith-based** - Although they are often not classically trained missionaries with Bible-college degrees, they are interested in living out their faith through some sort of action. Rather than “mission about Christ”, they prefer “mission with Christ”
- **Financially independent** – although Robert may disagree that he is financially free, both of our Mid-termers find themselves without too many financial entanglements. Robert does not have a mortgage, car payment, or family to support. Marie-Anne has taken care of many of these responsibilities and is now free to downsize her financial burdens. In both cases, there is a possibility to free funds for personal projects.
- **Free from pressing obligation** – A certain freedom from family obligation, care for children or aged parents is necessary for Mid-Termer participation. Volunteers at this stage are often free of many significant encumbrances that may preclude the participation of others. Youth with a summer or semester to spend overseas or the freedom of a recent retirement will often provide some of the most common participants in international engagement
- **Ready with a sense of adventure** – changes in life’s circumstances such as attaining an independent young-adulthood or finding yourself in an empty nest often creates a desire for growth and change. The changes illustrate the fleeting nature of life and a desire for people to ‘try on’ new opportunities.

### **Warning! Here be monsters!**

Pre-departure training is vitally helpful in developing our knowledge of the host culture. For some, training might mean learning a few phrases in the local dialect, preparing for some cultural understanding, and writing out a personal testimony. Because, there are often no formal requirements for Mid-Termers, it becomes easy to believe that successful entry and return is a relatively simple process.

Travelers who merely learn new cultural information without actively attempting to make positive cultural interpretations will find themselves “in a *worse engagement with the host culture than if we had spent no time at all studying the culture*. This is one way to

prepare just enough to be dangerous.”<sup>1</sup> The key for most successful Mid-Termers is the attitude that they bring to the field. A Mid-Termer who enters *and exits* as a learner will spend more time in **cultural interpretation** than in simple cultural knowledge.

Manuals and training often give the impression that all one needs is to find a way to learn a specific set of information, the unspoken thought is that once we have memorized the information we are prepared. While this method may be helpful for putting together flat-packed Swedish furniture, this may not be altogether helpful in the more complex real world(s). To that end, the following is NOT intended to simply stand as a manual for mid-termers. Instead, it will be more helpful for you to think of the following resource as a tool

The appropriate tool in the hand of a professional is often a valuable and helpful resource. A scalpel for a surgeon prepares her enough to be dangerous to a disease, while in the hands of a novice the same tool is dangerous. The fierce sharp edge of a scalpel cannot itself determine if the flesh it is cutting is that of the patient or the surgeon.

Great preparation will make you dangerous to issues of injustice, weak preparation will only make you dangerous to yourself. In short, this resource *cannot* fully ‘prepare you to go’, but *it will most definitely* point out areas where you can focus your own preparation.