



**7 THINGS
TO KNOW BEFORE
BECOMING
A MISSIONARY**

**KONTAKT
CANADA**

By Kontaktmission and New Life Association



LANGUAGE LEARNING CAN BE DAUNTING, BUT IT'S SO IMPORTANT

NATALIE RABOIN

Serves in Korce, Albania

And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance...And they were bewildered because each one of them was hearing them speak in his own language...So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls.

Acts 2:4,6,41

I love this passage of Scripture. How awesome it is that the Holy Spirit gave the disciples tongues so everyone else could understand what they were saying, resulting in 3,000 people being saved!

I grew up reading stories of missionaries who traveled all over the world, taking the name of Christ to multiple nations. Their stories were incredible and inspiring: there were revivals, healings, and near-death experiences.

Despite having traveled to several countries and having a degree in cross-cultural ministry, somewhere along the way I missed the fact that as a missionary I'd be spending the first few years learning a new language. The books I had studied in school didn't accurately portray that reality.

It's true that as a missionary, you will do amazing and impactful things. But the truth is, it's unlikely that 3,000 people will get saved on your first month in the field! The reality is that you will most definitely be limited in your understanding of the people and the culture when you can't fully communicate with them.

It takes hours of studying and many embarrassing moments of stumbling through conversation, to get a handle on the language. For instance, I've made the mistake of asking for fingernails instead of nails to hang things. I've also called a boy the devil because the words sound exactly the same! These will be your experiences until you finally reach a moment where they say to you, "Ah, now you're speaking my language!"

It can all be very intimidating and humbling, but I've found that people are generally forgiving and thrilled that you'd take time to communicate with them in their own language.

The best advice I can give you as you embark on this wonderful journey is to foster humility and a good sense of humor because laughing is a universal language!

Finally, think about the end-goal of your language learning which is to bring the Word of God to those that may not have heard of it yet. There is nothing quite like praying for someone in their own language and seeing how God moves in their life. Moments like these and others in ministry make the language difficulties you go through, completely worth it.



CULTURAL ADAPTATION IS TOUGH, BUT NECESSARY

STEPHEN WALTON

Serves in Galway, Ireland with his wife Alisa.

Culture is everywhere and permeates everything. It affects everything much more than you and I can ever know. This is something that can be difficult to grasp for those of us that grew up in one culture.

The truth is, one usually has no idea how much their culture affects them until they move from their home country into a completely new one. Much of our natural instincts and behaviors are governed by the way we were shaped while growing up. We often take for granted and assume that the way we do things is the right way.

So what happens when we move into another culture? When being five minutes early can actually mean being early and not just "*on time*"? Or when people don't just "*say it how it is*?" Chaos!

When the culture we move into behaves in a way we don't understand, the rose-colored romantic dream of what it would be like to live in that country quickly fades away. Toes are often stepped on, mistakes are made, and things become much more difficult than anticipated.

However, if we allow the cultural adaptation process to take place, something else begins to take the place of that romantic idealism: the reality of a different culture and a different way of thinking and acting. Along with that reality comes a change. You begin to see things in a new way and begin to understand your own culture as well as the new culture you just stepped into.

In my case (in Ireland), it has meant that I am rarely early for anything anymore. I honestly can't remember the last time I said, "*excuse me*" instead of "*sorry*." I still value things like attention to detail but also appreciate the Irish "*work to live*" mentality (as opposed to "*live to work*") that considers interpersonal relationships and community as highly important.

I am often in need of grace from others when I commit cultural faux pas, but I am learning to be sensitive to the Irish culture and Ireland's spiritual history. I find my life has been enriched by what I once considered to be cultural oddities. I am forever grateful and privileged to be able to live with the messiness of experiencing a new culture.

So, brace yourself for the chaos of a new culture and open yourself to the experience as you become transformed into someone new.



YOU DON'T HAVE TO GO IT ALONE

PETER VOGEL

Works in Central Asia and Russia from his base in Germany.
He was formerly a church planter in Russia.

When my wife and I were sent from Germany to Russia, we failed to realize the extent to which we would need other missionary colleagues to help us live and work effectively in the field.

Later, we learned in Acts that the first missionaries had similar experiences. After Paul and Barnabas completed their first missionary journey, involving the sending church, international connections, and the new Christians in the places they visited (chapters 11-14), the apostles came to the Council at Jerusalem (chapter 15). First, the missionaries had to give a report to the sending church in Antioch and discuss many issues with them and the Christian leaders in Jerusalem.

Missionary work is much broader than just the proclamation of the Good News. The missionary must cultivate many connections to be effective.

Here are a few of ours:

A FAITHFUL SENDING CHURCH

Over the 12 years abroad, we had a faithful sending church, with whom we had an agreement. The church had promised us moral, spiritual, and prayer support, financial participation, and regular field visits. We had the responsibility to provide information, keep up-to-date with the home church, visit it at least once a year, and add our influence on mission issues affecting the church. We also had a number of friends and churches in four different countries who supported us and the work. We communicated with them by prayer letters and personal contacts.

AN EFFECTIVE MISSIONS AGENCY

Throughout our time as missionaries, we were sent and guided by the mission agency Kontaktmission, Kontakt Canada's parent agency. They served as our employers and consultants. All our donations were assembled, organized and sent through the Kontaktmission office. We were accountable to mission leadership and benefitted from valuable advice through the regional leader. Once a month, and whenever needed, we communicated well with each other.

A RELIABLE INTERNATIONAL TEAM

As a regional leader of Kontaktmission, I had a team with workers from different countries. There were times in which our team consisted of local staff from Russia, as well as missionaries from Ukraine, the United States, and Germany. We were often encouraged to maintain a healthy level of contact with those colleagues. Despite the

fact that we all communicated in the same language (Russian), our cultures remained diverse and mentalities distinct and separate. As a result, it was important for us to actively pursue good relationships with them in intentional ways.

REGULAR CONTACT WITH LOCAL CHURCHES

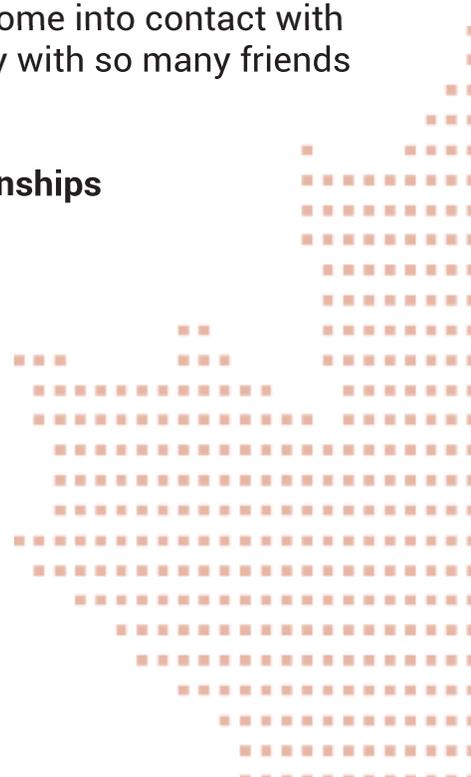
When we first arrived on the field, we researched how many evangelical Christians lived in the area. Unfortunately, Christians only made up about 0.2 percent of the population. We also found out that not very many missionaries worked in that area. Despite the small number, we made it our goal to build meaningful relationships with as many churches, missionaries and church leaders as we could. Over the years, great friendships have been built with evangelical pastors and missionaries. These contacts have proved to be incredibly valuable.

MEANINGFUL FRIENDSHIPS

Finally, and most importantly, we made it a priority to build relationships with those who came to the faith through the work. Friendships have been established and many of those Christians have become our co-workers. A few of them have even been on mission trips to Russia and Central Asia. Many of them visit us often in our home in Germany and we do our best to stay in touch with them.

Mission work is certainly about telling people about Christ but one cannot do the work alone. You need good contacts and meaningful relationships. As missionaries, we are becoming increasingly aware of the impact that those we have come into contact with have had on our lives. It is a tremendous privilege to work closely with so many friends and colleagues.

**Don't try to go it alone, build meaningful relationships
and watch your ministry life thrive.**





LEARN THE IMPORTANCE OF "TENTMAKING"

STEVE TINSLEY

Former missionary to Russia with his wife Joan.
Now serving in Member Care.

One of the things that surprised me most about coming on the mission field in Europe was how valuable some kind of *"tentmaking"* can be to your acceptance in the community.

My wife and I were called to Russia in our 60s as so-called *"finishers."* We went as part of a Kontaktmission church planting team. Our primary, but not only, focus was reaching Russian university students with the Gospel through English language programs. As a result of earlier short-term trips to the city, I was able to obtain a job teaching English in the state university. It was very part-time, it was paid very little, and it eventually became a volunteer position.

My understanding of tentmaking for missionaries, prior to becoming a missionary, was vaguely something like it's *"a way to be self-supporting and not have to raise support,"* or *"a way to get a visa."* Those may be valid points in some cases, but they did not apply to me.

People are naturally inquisitive about why you show up in their country. There is a well-known adage among those trying to unravel their curiosity on some question: *"Follow the money."* Whoever is paying you will say a lot about your purpose for being there.

I learned that when asked why I was in Russia, being able to say I taught English at the University was incredibly valuable. It deflected a basic distrust of foreigners. They relaxed. It provided credibility to our presence there. And most importantly it was something they understood as having value for their community. They were not capable, at least initially, of understanding the much greater value of the gospel message. Of course, as they got to know us better, they learned that we were also actively involved in the life and ministry of the local Russian church we were helping to plant.

I believe we can be very creative about coming up with something that can fill this kind of tentmaking role. Tentmaking provides a natural entre into the host city, and this I believe is its greatest value. I don't know how lucrative tentmaking was for the Apostle Paul, but I can imagine that when he entered a city, being able to work among the tentmakers eased his arrival and gave him an immediate audience to start sharing the gospel. That's what *"tentmaking"* did for us.



MISSION WORK CAN DO WONDERS FOR YOUR MARRIAGE

JENNIFER GAINER

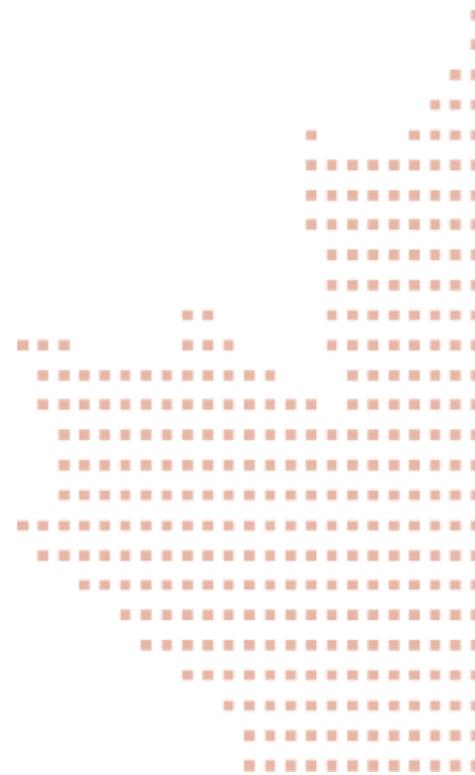
Serves in Kremenchug, Ukraine with her husband Jon.

With one caveat: make sure your marriage is 100 percent "*just right*" before you embark on this journey. What I mean by that is, make sure that you and your partner are on the same page on just about everything.

Before Jon and I moved to Ukraine in 2009, we had a good, solid marriage. We had heard, "*good is the enemy of best*," and moving halfway across the world proved that to be true as it changed, strengthened and grew our marriage in ways we could not have imagined.

While in the United States, we attended several marriage seminars offered through our church and tried to have a date night once a week. But once we were in Ukraine, we had a LOT more time to focus on each other. Because we didn't know the language very well, no one we knew spoke great English, and no one could understand what we were going through like we could, we started communicating on a whole different level.

God granted us unity in many areas, such as in the raising and disciplining of our children, in our vision and mission work while on the field, in our evangelistic outreach efforts, in our finances, and in our personal spiritual growth. All this has allowed us to be each other's greatest cheerleader, supporter, confidant and friend, and has helped us to be effective in the culture where we serve.





YOU REALLY, REALLY NEED A MISSION AGENCY...

TOMISLAV & MARIETTA JERKOVIC

Missionaries to Germany & Ukraine

We already knew this when we first started, but we learned very personally that a mission agency is important for every missionary. It provides unique support and accountability on the front lines of service.

Over the years, we've run into missionaries serving on the front lines of missions who serve without being connected to any actual mission organisation. "*What's the big deal about needing an organisation? We can handle it well without,*" they'd say.

Well, that may be true, but we believe we are not supposed to. **No Christian is meant to live out his faith all alone**, and likewise no missionary is meant to live out his or her calling alone. Today, independence may be culturally en vogue but it is not a biblical virtue (cf. Eph. 4). We need each other, and God wanted it to be that way for good reasons. When we as missionaries become part of a mission we receive support and are held accountable.

THERE ARE TWO CRUCIAL FACTORS FOR LONG-TERM SUCCESS IN MISSIONS.

A new missionary will often face an epic number of logistical, emotional and maybe even physical challenges which are entirely new.

Having someone alongside you who knows you and can provide sound practical and spiritual advice from experience will prove to be exactly what you need to tip things in your favour. Even seasoned missionaries face new challenges. They benefit, just as the new ones do, from staying accountable to others.

Independence and isolation is one of the most effective weapons of the devil to bring us down.

It may cause us to fall in areas like financial or sexual faithfulness, or tempt us to abuse our influence (a.k.a. power). You want to stay emotionally and spiritually healthy and serve effectively on the front lines of missions long-term? You think you don't need to commit to a mission organisation for that?

You better think again!



REMEMBER THAT GOD IS FOR YOU

KEVIN & ANGELINA MULLINS

Missionaries to Portugal

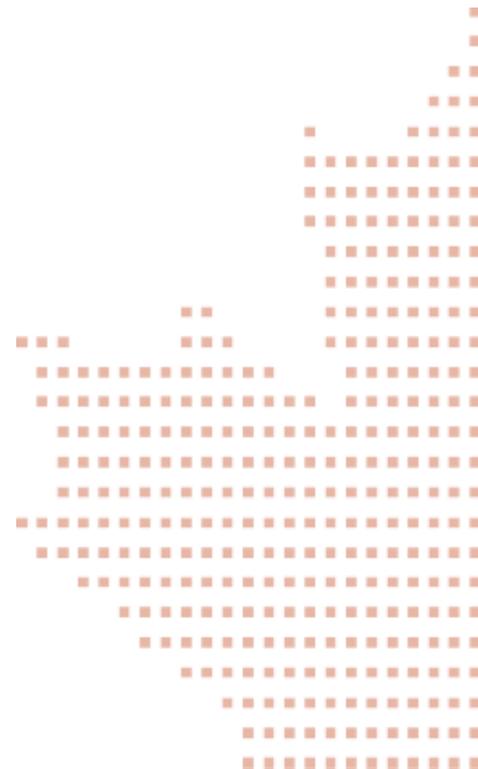
The Lord loves His missionaries. He takes care of us in ways we can never understand until we've experienced it.

Mike Tyson, the world champion boxer, once quipped before a title fight, "*Everybody has a plan until they get punched in the mouth.*" While that may be mere pre-fight posturing it's a truth to one of cross-cultural ministry's inevitable lessons – when you're stunned from a cross-cultural face punch the only thing left to keep you on your feet is a pre-established trust in the faithfulness of God.

We arrived in Europe with the grandest of plans: plant churches, save Portugal, and with the time left over, save the world too. Needless to say, our carefully laid plans never made it to the 6-month mark. Newborn babies, teammate changes, language and cultural challenges, support changes, loss of family in the U.S. and a devastating economic crisis all conspired to pound into dust the trust we had placed in our plans.

Perhaps the details of our story are unique, but the learned life lesson is not. Every shift, every challenge has forced us time and again to reclaim (sometimes through the tears) our most foundational belief: God is for us. He never changes, never leaves us, never forsakes. He promised it and we are witnesses to his faithfulness through every challenge, despite every mistake and in every victory.

The punches are coming, what will you do?





God is moving in the world and you should be too!
Let us help you take the necessary steps to fulfill God's calling in your life.

SCHEDULE A DISCOVERY CALL

www.kontaktcanada.org