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IMPROVING THE LEVEL OF CARE FOR SOUTHERN  
BAPTIST INTERCULTURAL MISSIONARIES  
SERVING IN NORTH AMERICA

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A Dissertation  
Presented to  
the Faculty of  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Missiology

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by  
Trent Isaac DeLoach  
December 2013

**APPROVAL SHEET**

IMPROVING THE LEVEL OF CARE FOR SOUTHERN  
BAPTIST INTERCULTURAL MISSIONARIES  
SERVING IN NORTH AMERICA

Trent Isaac DeLoach

Read and Approved by:

\_\_\_\_\_  
J. D. Payne (Chair)

\_\_\_\_\_  
M. David Sills

\_\_\_\_\_  
Jeff K. Walters

Date \_\_\_\_\_

To my dad, Gary DeLoach

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## PREFACE

First, I wish to thank God for sustaining my strength and focus during the dissertation process. He deserves all the praise and glory for any fruit produced by this study on missionary care. Furthermore, I wish to thank my family. Completing the dissertation would have been impossible without the support and encouragement from my grandparents, parents, and wonderful wife. Finally, I would like to thank my committee: J. D. Payne, David Sills, and Jeff Walters. Their guidance along this journey has been invaluable.

Trent I. DeLoach

Louisville, Kentucky

December 2013



## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

My grandfather's nickname in World War II was "Lucky." Part of his duties included relaying important messages in combat zones. He risked his life taking information from the frontlines to the officers that were coordinating the battles. They called him Lucky because he barely escaped being killed or captured by the Germans many times. My grandfather was dyslexic and never learned to read. However, he could memorize large amounts of information after hearing a message only once. The information he carried in his mind helped save hundreds of lives. One night he got pinned down behind enemy lines. He hid in a ditch for hours as German soldiers passed by. He survived the passing Germans but was later hit by a grenade from one of his own men. Paramedics saved his life, and he returned home a hero. Ted Isaac DeLoach received the Silver Star for his bravery as a message runner. Military leaders adjusted strategies, deployed reinforcements, and waged a more effective campaign based on information they received from the frontlines from American heroes like my grandfather.

In any combat situation, information from the frontlines is invaluable. Military leaders must know what is happening in the trenches. How are the soldiers doing? Do they have adequate supplies? Are they wounded? Do they need to be rescued? What will it take for them to succeed? Battles are won and lost based on the condition of the troops on the frontlines. The same is true for missionaries. Missionaries are the soldiers on the frontlines. Pastors and counselors often serve as paramedics. Missions administrators are the officers coordinating the battle. Administrators must know how

their missionaries are doing. Communication between the frontlines and the leaders is vital for waging a more effective campaign.

The battle scars missionaries endure on the foreign mission field are well documented. Extensive studies have identified the factors that lead to missionary stress and negative attrition.<sup>1</sup> The leading causes of stress include inter-personal conflict, culture shock, family crisis, financial pressure, and spiritual warfare.<sup>2</sup> The leading issues related to negative attrition include lack of home church support, moral failure, inadequate training, and conflict with mission agencies.<sup>3</sup> Astute mission organizations have added missionary care programs to their list of priorities. Proactive care is vital for navigating conflict and preventing burnout. Hence, providing quality care reduces negative attrition, which leads to more effective use of resources and healthier mission agencies. Success depends on knowing how missionaries are doing and doing whatever it takes to care for them well.

The battle scars or challenges involved in intercultural missions in North America are similar to those on the foreign field. North American intercultural missionaries<sup>4</sup> face inter-personal conflict, culture shock, family crisis, financial pressure,

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<sup>1</sup>The World Evangelical Fellowship sponsored one of the most thorough studies on missionary attrition, the Reducing Missionary Attrition Project (ReMAP). The ReMAP occurred between 1992 and 1994. The study included missionaries from 14 countries and 455 mission organizations. Over 27,000 missionaries participated in the study. The researchers acknowledge several types of attrition that range from acceptable to problematic. Acceptable attrition includes returning home at retirement or the completion of a task. Problematic or negative attrition occurs when missionaries return home due to mismanagement, unrealistic expectations, or personal failure. A follow-up study focusing on best practices in missionary retention was completed in 2001. The follow-up study was titled ReMAP II. For the results of ReMAP I, see William D. Taylor, *Too Valuable to Lose: Exploring the Causes and Cures of Missionary Attrition* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1997). For the results of ReMAP II, see Rob Hay et al., *Worth Keeping: Global Perspectives on Best Practice in Missionary Retention* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library and World Evangelical Alliance, 2007).

<sup>2</sup>Marjory F. Foyle. *Honorably Wounded: Stress Among Christian Workers* (Grand Rapids: Monarch 200), 10.

<sup>3</sup>Taylor, *Too Valuable to Lose* 10.

<sup>4</sup>Any reference to “missionaries” from this point forward refers to North American, intercultural missionaries unless otherwise noted.

and spiritual warfare. In addition, many face low levels of home church support, inadequate training, and conflict with mission agencies and churches. Furthermore, unique challenges exist that need to be identified. The unique challenges may relate to issues like feeling inferior to foreign missionaries and raising financial support while serving in North America. However, a significant gap in field research that explores these challenges exists within the Southern Baptist Convention.<sup>5</sup>

The current research related to missions in North America typically falls into two categories—best practice studies and awareness studies. Best practice studies focus on the evangelistic strategies that are working among foreign-born immigrants. The pragmatic nature of these studies appeals to evangelistic, project-minded Southern Baptists. In 2009, the North American Mission Board and LifeWay Research partnered together to produce a study titled *Receptivity and Best Practices: A Survey and Analysis of First-Generation Immigrants in North America with Implications for their Receptivity to the Gospel*. Over 300 people were interviewed in the study. Twenty-four respondents identified themselves as cross-cultural missionaries.<sup>6</sup> Helpful insights from this study provided field-tested strategies for effective cross-cultural engagement. Best practice studies are best suited to equip those that want to do ministry in an international context. They help answer the question, “What should one do as a cross-cultural missionary?”

Awareness studies focus on demographic data related to the foreign-born community. Information obtained from census data and other demographic surveys dominate these studies. For instance, awareness studies show that North America is the third largest mission field in the world with 259 million people who live outside of the

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<sup>5</sup>I am unaware of any major research focused on missionary stress, attrition, and retention in the North American intercultural context.

<sup>6</sup>It is important to note that NAMB’s and LifeWay’s research included multiple evangelical denominations that were similar to Southern Baptists in belief and practice. Hence, it is unclear if the 24 cross-cultural missionaries interviewed were Southern Baptists.

salvation that Christ offers.<sup>7</sup> At least 541 unengaged and unreached people groups are represented in North America.<sup>8</sup> Currently, 40 million foreign-born immigrants make up 13 percent of America's population.<sup>9</sup> Phrases such as "We must reach the nations among us!" characterize the appeals that follow the numerical data. Awareness studies play a strategic role in helping churches understand the immensity of the task in North America. Furthermore, awareness studies provide a bird's eye view of the need for cross-cultural missions. They are best suited to increase knowledge and motivate prayer. They help answer the question, "Why should one do cross-cultural missions?" They may or may not consult missionaries on the frontlines regarding the data they present. Hence, the need exists for a third type of study.

The importance of knowing how missionaries are doing on the frontlines requires a study focused on the condition of the missionary. A condition study would help the church better understand and care for its missionaries. It would focus on their spiritual, physical, emotional, and financial wellbeing. It would strive for an up-close look at the daily challenges missionaries face as opposed to a bird's eye view of what they do or why they do it. Furthermore, a condition study would shed light on unique challenges faced in a North American context. A thorough condition study would function as a message from the frontlines to those coordinating the battle. The message, moreover, would help ensure resources are used wisely and those in the trenches are adequately supported.

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<sup>7</sup>Carol Pipes, "Send North America: Why Every Church Must Plant," *On Mission* 15, <http://www.onmission.com/onmissioncb.aspx?id=8590001173> (accessed March 26, 2012).

<sup>8</sup>Global Research, "Global Status of Evangelical Christianity," <http://public.imb.org/globalresearch/Pages/default.aspx> (accessed March 5, 2012).

<sup>9</sup>United States Census Bureau, "The Newly Arrived Foreign-Born Population of the United States: 2010," [http://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/foreignborn\\_population/cb11-tps45.html](http://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/foreignborn_population/cb11-tps45.html) (accessed March 26, 2012).

Both positive and negative factors enhance the need for such a study among Southern Baptist missionaries serving in North America. The positive factors include the increased number of Southern Baptists that are responding to the need to engage the nations in North America. Both the North American Mission Board and the International Mission Board encourage Southern Baptists to minister cross-culturally. The North American Mission Board often partners with state conventions and local associations to support cross-cultural missionaries. The International Mission Board encourages missionary candidates to engage unreached ethnic groups in North America as part of their pre-field preparation. Furthermore, God is calling average church members to actively reach the foreign-born community. Local churches across North America are deploying a diverse group of people to engage an increasingly diverse population. The increased number of Southern Baptists involved in North American cross-cultural missions amplifies the need to know how they are doing. Southern Baptists would have a greater impact if those that began different ministries could persevere, avoiding negative attrition. Efforts to reduce negative attrition, however, would require detailed knowledge of how the missionaries are doing.

The negative factors that enhance the need for a condition study include the lack of knowledge that currently exists regarding who the missionaries are and how they are doing. One can be certain that the lack of knowledge exists because it is challenging enough to identify who the Southern Baptist missionaries are. No one knows the exact number or location of all the missionaries.<sup>10</sup> Neither the North American Mission Board nor the International Mission Board tracts such data in the North American context. The autonomy that exists between Southern Baptist entities further complicates the situation. Churches can deploy missionaries independent of the mission boards or state conventions.

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<sup>10</sup>These statements are based on my experience and the questions I have asked my supervisors and peers.

This autonomy explains the lack of a cohesive strategy for reaching the nations in North America. In turn, this lack of a cohesive strategy explains the lack of knowledge and why no significant effort has been made to identify those that view themselves as cross-cultural missionaries in North America. Obtaining an accurate report from the frontlines regarding the condition of the missionaries is therefore difficult. Yet, the lack of knowledge is further reason to pursue a condition study.

### **Thesis**

This dissertation explores the contemporary conditions and challenges of Southern Baptist intercultural missionaries serving in North America for the purpose of determining how Southern Baptists can improve the level of care for their domestic missionaries. The dissertation is guided by three basic questions: How are the missionaries doing? What challenges are they facing? How can Southern Baptists better care for their needs? The spiritual, physical, emotional, and financial condition of the missionaries receives special attention. An effort is made to identify challenges that are unique to intercultural missionaries in the North American context. Finally, the data obtained from the missionaries is used to determine how Southern Baptists can improve the level of care for its domestic missionaries. Hence, the dissertation functions as a message from the frontlines to the broader Southern Baptist family.

At least two terms need further clarification to understand the scope of the thesis. The first term is the adjective *intercultural*. The term is used to emphasize the process of crossing linguistic and cultural barriers in missions. Most Christians minister to people like themselves. It is far easier to engage people that speak one's language, understand one's customs, and share one's values. However, the Great Commission calls believers to overcome these tendencies and cross cultures in order to make disciples of all nations.

Ralph Winter's delineation between E-1, E-2, and E-3 evangelism explains the significance of intercultural missions in North America. According to Winter, E-1 evangelism involves reaching people from the same culture, E-2 from near culture people, and E-3 evangelism involves reaching people from distant cultures. Both E-2 and E-3 approaches require a basic sensitivity to different cultures and skills related to contextualizing the gospel. E-3 evangelism often involves learning a different language and overcoming significant cultural differences. Winter argues that the most urgent need in the North American church is for E-2 and E-3 approaches in missions. According to Winter, far too many people groups lack a significant number of believers to evangelize their own people through an E-1 approach.<sup>11</sup> "Present day American Christians can wait forever in their cozy, middle-class pews for the world to come to Christ and join them. But unless they adopt E-2 methods and both go out after these people and help them found their own churches, evangelism in America will face, and is already facing, steadily diminishing returns."<sup>12</sup> Winter's prophetic words emphasize the need for intercultural missions in North America. Hence, this dissertation will focus on those that are engaging near and distant culture people. A special emphasis will be placed on those that consistently face significant cultural and language barriers in their intercultural context.

The second term that needs further clarification is *missionary*. The term *missionary* is intimately connected with other terms such as *missions* and *missional*. The

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<sup>11</sup>The following extended quote from Winter's address at the 1974 Lausanne Congress is helpful in understanding the relationship between the different types of evangelism: "The master pattern of the expansion of the Christian movement is first special E-2 and E-3 efforts to cross-cultural barriers into new communities and to establish strong, on-going, vigorously evangelizing denominations, and then for that national church to carry the word forward on the really high-powered E-1 level. We are thus forced to believe that until every tribe and tongue has a strong, powerfully evangelizing church in it, and thus an E-1 witness within it, E-2 and E-3 efforts coming from outside are still essential and highly urgent." See James Dixon Douglas, ed., *Let the Earth Hear His Voice: International Congress on World Evangelization: Lausanne, Switzerland, vol. Papers and Responses* (Minneapolis: World Wide, 1975), 220.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, 222.

terms share the same Latin root of *missio* or *mitto*, which means “sent.” The terms can be used to label almost every type of ministry conducted by the church. Everything becomes missions and everyone becomes a missionary when the terms are used broadly. The term *missionary* will maintain a more narrow focus throughout this dissertation. According to the *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, “These men and women are cross-cultural workers who serve within or without their national boundaries, and they will cross some kind of linguistic, cultural, or geographic barriers as authorized sent ones.”<sup>13</sup> The intercultural nature of missionaries is the primary emphasis of this definition. According to the *Acts 1:8 Leadership Guide*, “NAMB and IMB define ‘missionary’ as a person who, in response to God’s call and gifting, leaves his or her comfort zone and crosses cultural, geographic, or other barriers to proclaim the gospel and live out a Christian witness in obedience to the Great Commission.”<sup>14</sup> Proclaiming the gospel in Great Commission obedience is the primary emphasis of this definition. The priority of gospel proclamation in missions helps differentiate between biblical missionaries and cross-cultural social workers. Intercultural workers who solely focus on meeting human needs without a clear emphasis on gospel proclamation will be disqualified from the study. An emphasis will be placed on missionaries that proclaim the gospel in both word and deed as they cross cultural barriers and do their part in fulfilling the Great Commission.

## **Background**

I currently serve as an Ethnic Specialist with the North American Mission Board and the Kentucky Baptist Convention. My wife and I moved to Louisville,

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<sup>13</sup>Scott A. Moreau, ed., *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2000), 592.

<sup>14</sup>*Embracing the Acts 1:8 Challenge* (Alpharetta, GA: North American Mission Board, 2004), 48.



Kentucky in the summer of 2003. We immediately connected with the large Bosnian community. Most Bosnians came to Louisville as refugees after the civil war that destroyed their country in the early 1990s. Our Bosnian friends introduced us to Louisville's diverse population. Louisville is one of nine cities across North America that has experienced a 100 percent growth rate among its foreign-born community during the last ten years.<sup>15</sup> The foreign-born residents now number over 60 thousand people.<sup>16</sup> Over 90 countries are represented in the city with at least 100 different languages spoken in our public school system.<sup>17</sup> The influence of Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism is growing. New mosques and temples are under construction. Ethnic restaurants and markets are springing up. Neighborhoods are changing. Local Southern Baptist churches are being forced to re-think how they approach ministry in a globalized, international context.

My role as an Ethnic Specialist revolves around three primary tasks: modeling, mobilizing, and mentoring. Modeling intercultural missions by sharing Christ with our international neighbors is my first task. My wife and I have maintained a consistent witness among Louisville's Bosnian community. In addition, we have helped engage the Iraqi, Somali, Burmese, and Nepali communities. Mobilizing churches for intercultural outreach is my second task. I have spent most of my time working with the churches from the Long Run Baptist Association. My mobilizing efforts have included guiding ethnic tours, facilitating mosque and temple visits, and speaking at churches. Mentoring cross-cultural missionaries is my third task. So far, I have helped identify at least 30

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<sup>15</sup>The Brookings Institution, "Immigrants in 2010 Metropolitan America: A Decade of Change," [http://www.brookings.edu/papers/2011/1013\\_immigration\\_wilson\\_singer.aspx](http://www.brookings.edu/papers/2011/1013_immigration_wilson_singer.aspx) (accessed March 26, 2012).

<sup>16</sup>Louisville Office of Globalization, "Population Demographic: Facts about Immigrants in Louisville," <http://www.louisvilleky.gov/Globalization/Resources/Demographics.htm> (accessed March 26, 2012).

<sup>17</sup>Jefferson County Public Schools, "Jefferson County Public Schools Facts: 2011," <http://www.jcpsky.net/Pubs/index.html> (accessed March 25, 2012).

individuals that consistently engage the international community in Louisville. We have connected with each other through peer mentoring meetings and social gatherings. In addition, I coach several missionaries on an individual basis. My ultimate goal as an Ethnic Specialist is to see people from every language and ethnic group in Louisville worship Jesus.

The joys and pains I have experienced over the past several years have provided the motivation to understand better what other intercultural missionaries have experienced while serving in North America. I want to know how they are doing and how churches can better support them. I want to see Southern Baptist churches lead the way in engaging the nations that have come to North America. In order to see this vision fulfilled, we have to know what is happening on the frontlines. I see myself following in my grandfather's metaphorical footsteps. I want to be a message runner. I want the leaders of the Southern Baptist Convention to know how our North American soldiers/missionaries are doing? Do they have adequate supplies? Are they wounded? What will it take for them to succeed?

### **Methodology**

The methodology of this dissertation includes a combination of exploratory qualitative research methods. Exploratory qualitative research is frequently used to examine new areas of interest in order to satisfy a researcher's curiosity or to comprehend a situation better. According to Earl Babbie, "Exploratory studies are quite valuable in social scientific research. They are essential whenever a researcher is breaking new ground and they almost always yield new insights."<sup>18</sup> The primary research methods include a survey questionnaire and qualitative interviewing. A snowball sampling strategy is utilized with the survey questionnaire. Snowball sampling involves asking

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<sup>18</sup>Earl Babbie, *The Practice of Social Research*, 10<sup>th</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids: Thomson, 2004), 88.

each respondent to identify other qualified respondents who could participate in the study. The strategy is typically used when the actual number of qualified respondents is unknown or difficult to locate.<sup>19</sup> The qualitative interviews use semi-structured questions to elicit further depth and detail concerning the research topic. According to Herbert Rubin and Irene Rubin, “Unlike survey research, in which exactly the same questions are asked to each individual, in qualitative interviews each conversation is unique, as researchers match their questions to what each interviewee knows and is willing to share.”<sup>20</sup> Hence, the interviews should compliment the surveys and provide deeper levels of understanding regarding the research topic.

The qualifications to participate in the study revolved around one’s church membership, age, and intercultural experience. Each respondent had to be a member of a Southern Baptist church. The primary reason I focus solely on Southern Baptists is to limit the scope of the study. In addition, writing to Southern Baptists as a Southern Baptist allows for greater freedom to evaluate Southern Baptist practices. Furthermore, qualified respondents had to be at least eighteen years of age or older and see themselves as intercultural missionaries. The ideal respondent had to have at least 2 years of experience serving a minimum of 20 hours a week in their missionary role. Fortunately, respondents were located that represent all geographic regions in North America. In addition, the research study included both beginners and veterans, young and old, and untrained and seminary-educated missionaries.

One last caveat about the dissertation deserves attention before proceeding. The research project does not attempt to judge the effectiveness of the various missionaries. Missionaries that have planted no churches or experienced little conversion growth receive as much attention as missionaries that have planted multiple churches

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 184.

<sup>20</sup>Herbert J. Rubin and Irene S. Rubin, *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2005), 4.

with much conversion growth. As previously described, this dissertation focuses on *how* the missionaries are doing instead of *what* they are doing. The qualitative research emphasizes the spiritual, physical, emotional, and financial condition of the missionaries. In addition, emphasis is placed on understanding the daily challenges of serving in North America. Understanding the condition and challenges of the missionaries then informs the steps that Southern Baptists can take to better care for their domestic missionaries.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE SIGNIFICANCE OF INTERCULTURAL MISSIONS IN NORTH AMERICA IN SOUTHERN BAPTIST LIFE

My grandfather, Ted Deloach, was one of thousands of heroes that fought bravely in World War II. British Captain James Martin Stagg was another hero who was responsible for saving thousands of lives. Captain Stagg played a strategic role in protecting my grandfather even though the two men never met. He was a meteorologist and was responsible for convincing General Eisenhower to delay the Normandy Invasion for one day instead of moving forward as planned on June 5<sup>th</sup> or delaying the invasion for months. The allied troops had to invade Europe in early June to take advantage of the full moon and high tides that would allow their amphibious landing crafts to travel over some of Hitler's coastal barricades. Dangerous storms surrounded the English Channel during this opportune time. The storms made it impossible to deploy the landing crafts and provide air support for the ground troops. The Germans knew this and never feared a large land invasion in early June. They assumed that the allied troops would need six days of clear weather to invade Europe. Captain Stagg studied the changing conditions of the storms and predicted that a small break in the weather would occur the morning of June 6<sup>th</sup>. The allied troops took advantage of this small window of opportunity and launched the most extensive land invasion in modern history. They caught the Germans by surprise, conducting the invasion with little interference from the weather.<sup>21</sup> My grandfather landed safely at Normandy on June 7<sup>th</sup>. His unit encountered fierce

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<sup>21</sup>Sverre Petterssen, *Weathering the Storm: Sverre Petterssen, the D-Day Forecast, and the Rise of Modern Meteorology*, ed. James Rodger Fleming (Boston: American Meteorological Society, 2001), 75.

resistance as they marched across France. My grandfather's unit fought bravely until Europe was liberated. The liberation of Europe depended on a successful invasion at Normandy. In many respects, the successful invasion of Normandy depended on the weather. Fortunately, Captain Stagg understood the changing climate. He knew how the climate would affect the troops and the overall battle plan. Historians and meteorologists argue that tens of thousands of men were spared death at sea by the decision to delay the invasion to the morning of the 6<sup>th</sup>.<sup>22</sup> Hence, Captain Stagg's knowledge of the shifting climate was a significant factor in the Allied victory.

The weather conditions that influenced the outcome of D-Day illustrates the importance of knowing the climate that troops face. The climate always affects the condition of the troops in the trenches. Being knowledgeable of factors such as the season of the year or approaching storms can be critical in a battle. These conditions are always changing. Hence, battle plans have to be adjusted as the climate changes. Wise military leaders always have dedicated personnel that pay close attention to shifting climates. A small shift at a critical time can influence whether one pushes forward or pulls back. A significant shift at a critical time can determine the outcome of a battle. Hence, to provide quality care for troops on the ground one must know the changing climate they face.

The same principle applies to missions in North America. Intercultural missionaries in North America face a changing climate. Just as weather patterns change over time, the climate in missions in North America is changing. For instance, North America is experiencing a significant growth in its urban areas. As urbanization takes root, Southern Baptists have to dedicate more resources to reach these areas. In addition, North America is becoming more secular. Fewer Americans are being raised to trust in

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 79.

God, believe the Bible, and uphold Christian values. Therefore, Southern Baptists have to produce evangelistic resources that assume little or no basic understanding of Christianity.

One of the most significant climate changes affecting Southern Baptists is the explosion of ethnic diversity across North America. Immigrants from around the world continue to flock to North America. The steady flow of both legal and illegal immigrants is changing the ethnic make-up of neighborhoods and cities. Minority groups now outnumber the white population in over half of American cities.<sup>23</sup> William Frey explains, “Continued growth and dispersal of minority populations, especially Hispanics, now contrasts vividly with the minimal growth of the aging white population. Minorities are fueling overall population growth in a wider array of places, including suburbs in all parts of the country.”<sup>24</sup> This rapid increase in ethnic diversity is challenging the way Southern Baptists function. For instance, one can no longer go door-to-door in many communities and assume that the residents will speak English. Furthermore, one can no longer plant a traditional English-speaking church and expect to reach a whole community.

Southern Baptists are aware of the changing climate regarding ethnic diversity. In an article titled, “SBC Decline and Demographic Change,” Ed Stetzer writes, “In essence, the percentage of the other race group in the SBC has remained fairly static for the past quarter century, whereas the US population has become increasingly more ethnically diverse. In fact, the difference, in percentage of the other race group between the SBC and the general US population is statistically significant since 1993.”<sup>25</sup> Stetzer’s

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<sup>23</sup>William Frey, “Melting Pot Cities and Suburbs: Racial and Ethnic Change in Metro America in the 2000s,” *The Brookings Institution*, <http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2011/05/04-census-ethnicity-frey> (accessed October 1, 2012).

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>Ed Stetzer, “SBC Decline and Demographic Change,” in *The Great Commission Resurgence: Fulfilling God’s Mandate in Our Time*, ed. Adam Greenway and Chuck Lawless (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010), 16.

research reveals a growing ethnic diversity gap between North American Society and Southern Baptist congregations. If the gap continues to grow, Southern Baptists will lose influence and relevance in our society. According to Albert Mohler, “The Southern Baptist Convention will be either more diverse or more diminished. We will either look more and more like America ethnically, or we are going to stand out for our standing out from the culture.”<sup>26</sup> Mohler follows his frank observation on the future of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) by admitting that embracing diversity will be hard for the SBC. He argues that pursuing ethnic diversity will require much denominational energy, a lot of discomfort, and an incredible strategy.<sup>27</sup>

Fortunately, Southern Baptist intercultural missionaries are willing to devote their energy and endure great discomfort to engage diverse ethnic groups across North America. They are a significant part of the strategy that Mohler calls for. Their willingness to break through cultural and linguistic boundaries to reach diverse ethnic groups is helping Southern Baptists close the diversity gap. The size and scope of the diversity gap reveals the significance of the strategy. Therefore, to understand the significance of domestic intercultural missions in Southern Baptist life, one must explore the ethnic diversity gap in greater detail. Just as a meteorologist studies weather patterns, one must analyze the demographic trends of ethnic diversity in North America and in the SBC.<sup>28</sup> Southern Baptists must know how the climate is changing so that they can better care for their “troops” in the trenches.

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<sup>26</sup>Albert Mohler, “The Future of the Southern Baptist Convention,” in *The Great Commission Resurgence: Fulfilling God’s Mandate in Our Time*, ed. Adam Greenway and Chuck Lawless (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010), 94.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 95.

<sup>28</sup>Demographic information from Mexico is not included in this study. The North American Mission Board is solely focused on the United States and Canada. Mexico falls under the responsibility of the International Mission Board.



## North American Ethnic Diversity

The Statue of Liberty stands tall in the middle of New York Harbor. She has welcomed millions of immigrants to the shores of North America. A poem by Emma Lazarus is etched into the stone at the base of the statue. The poem reads,

Give me your tired, your poor,  
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,  
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.  
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,  
I light my lamp beside the golden door!<sup>29</sup>

These words characterize the reputation that North America has cultivated toward those immigrants who founded both the United States and Canada. Both countries welcome thousands of legal immigrants each year. Likewise, both countries attract thousands of illegal immigrants each year. Legal and illegal immigrants are people that have accepted displacement from their home countries in order to pursue a better life elsewhere.

According to Soerens and Hwang, “Though immigration policies have changed quite drastically over the last two centuries, immigrants themselves are still pushed out of their countries of origin by poverty, war and persecution and are still drawn to the United States by promises of jobs and economic advancement, freedom and family reunification.”<sup>30</sup> The hope of a better life has brought countless people to North America over the past two hundred years. The steady flow of immigrants explains why ethnic diversity is exploding across North America.

European immigrants came to North America by the thousands in the late 1800s and early 1900s. They blended into their new environment and gave North America the reputation of being a “melting pot.” During the past fifty years, North America has experienced a tremendous increase in immigrants from South America, Asia,

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<sup>29</sup>Emma Lazarus, *Emma Lazarus: Selected Poems* (New York: Library of America, 2005), 58.

<sup>30</sup>Matthew Soerens, and Jenny Hwang, *Welcoming the Stranger: Justice, Compassion & Truth in the Immigration Debate* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009), 47.

and Africa. This influx of non-European immigrants has now given North America the reputation of being a “tossed salad.” Instead of becoming one homogeneous people, American society is comprised of hundreds of ethnic groups that may or may not attempt to integrate with each other. The presence of so many different groups with their own languages and customs creates a mosaic of ethnicities. Each group is unique and adds to the overall beauty of the North American landscape. Oscar Romo explains, “No other country in the world has permitted its demographic mix to change so quickly, while believing that in so doing, it will be enriched by it.”<sup>31</sup> The intentionality of the United States and Canada to remain open to immigrants seeking a better life is creating significant trends worth exploring.

According to the 2010 Census, the foreign-born community now represents 13 percent of the total population of the United States.<sup>32</sup> Over 40 million people in America were born in another country.<sup>33</sup> From 1990 to 2000, the foreign-born population grew by 11.3 million people. From 2000 to 2010, the foreign-born population grew by 8.8 million. Eighty-five percent of the foreign-born immigrants speak a language other than English at home, and 19 percent live below the poverty line. Roughly 25 percent of foreign-born immigrants live in California. Another 25 percent live in New York, Texas, or Florida.<sup>34</sup> The foreign-born immigrants continue to flock to large cities. They are, however, just as likely to move to small and medium-size cities. At least 10 cities in

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<sup>31</sup>Oscar Romo, *American Mosaic: Church Planting in Ethnic America* (Nashville: Broadman, 1993), 46.

<sup>32</sup>“Immigrants in 2010 Metropolitan America: A Decade of Change,” *The Brookings Institution*, <http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2011/10/13-immigration-wilson-singer>.

<sup>33</sup>U.S. Bureau of the Census, “The Newly Arrived Foreign-Born Population of the United States: 2010,” [http://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/foreignborn\\_population/cb11-tps45.html](http://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/foreignborn_population/cb11-tps45.html) (accessed October 1, 2012).

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*

America doubled their foreign-born population during the past decade. These cities include places like Little Rock, Arkansas; Birmingham, Alabama; and Louisville, Kentucky.<sup>35</sup> Further, foreign-born immigrants are just as likely to move directly to the suburbs. Frey explains,

In addition to moving to metro areas with little history of immigration, immigrants have increasingly settled in suburbs over cities. Job growth in the suburbs, affordable housing, good schools, and safe neighborhoods have attracted immigrants and natives alike to suburban areas. As a result, immigrant enclaves in central cities no longer dominate as the landing pad for new immigrants. Rather, newcomers often settle directly in the suburbs, joining family and friends there. The outcome is increased racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity in the suburbs.<sup>36</sup>

The diversification of both the city and the suburbs makes it almost impossible to ignore the shifting demographic trends. Minority groups are on the rise. The United States is changing. However, America is far from unique in terms of its ethnic diversity trends.

Canada is also experiencing similar growth patterns in their foreign-born population. In 2010, Statistics Canada published a report titled *Projections of the Diversity of the Canadian Population*. The Canadian government predicts that by 2031 between 25 and 28 percent of its population could be foreign-born.<sup>37</sup> Canada believes its Asian community will still be the largest visible minority group. They anticipate, however, that their West African and Middle Eastern immigrants will grow fastest during the next 20 years.<sup>38</sup> Canada expects the increase of foreign-born immigrants to affect their large urban areas the most. In fact, Statistics Canada predicts that by 2031

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<sup>35</sup>William Frey, "Immigrants in 2010 Metropolitan America: A Decade of Change," *The Brookings Institution*, <http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2011/10/13-immigration-wilson-singer> (accessed October 1, 2012).

<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

<sup>37</sup>"Projections of the Diversity of the Canadian Population," Government of Canada, Statistics Canada, May 17, 2010, [http://www5.statcan.gc.ca/access\\_acces/alternative\\_alternatif.action?l=eng&loc=http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/91-551-x/91-551-x2010001-eng.pdf&t=Projections%20of%20the%20Diversity%20of%20the%20Canadian%20Population](http://www5.statcan.gc.ca/access_acces/alternative_alternatif.action?l=eng&loc=http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/91-551-x/91-551-x2010001-eng.pdf&t=Projections%20of%20the%20Diversity%20of%20the%20Canadian%20Population) (accessed October 1, 2012).

<sup>38</sup>Ibid.

approximately 55 percent of persons living in Canada's metropolitan areas will either be immigrants or Canadian-born children of immigrants.<sup>39</sup>

Several factors explain why ethnic diversity is on the rise in North America. Both the United States and Canada support intentional efforts to cultivate ethnic diversity within its borders. The intentional efforts include receiving immigrants through a lottery system, relocating refugees, recruiting international students, and employing both temporary and permanent international workers. In addition, both countries receive large numbers of illegal immigrants each year. A brief overview of each pathway that results in residency in the United States and Canada helps to explain the significant trends in North America's diversification.

### **Lottery System**

The lottery system involves a simple strategy to increase diversity. Each year, the United States and Canada determine a definite number of legal immigrants that they will accept from various countries. Immigrants apply for relocation in their homeland. If their name is selected, they have the option of migrating to North America as legal residents. The lottery system, in America, is referred to as the Diversity Lottery Program. The program allows fifty thousand people to migrate to America each year. Diversity is achieved by the requirement that applicants must come from countries that have resettled less than fifty thousand people in America during a five year period of time. Hence, applicants from countries like China, India, and Mexico are not eligible for the lottery. The applicants who are accepted are permitted to bring their spouse and children that are under the age of twenty-one. Between 1995 and 2010, over 785,500 immigrants made their way to America through the Diversity Lottery Program.<sup>40</sup> The applicants receive

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<sup>39</sup>Ibid.

their Green Cards upon entry and are encouraged to pursue citizenship. Once they become citizens, they can then request visas for other members of their immediate families. Thus, the lottery program has a greater effect on ethnic diversity than the sheer number of applicants that come.

### **Refugee Resettlement**

The plight of refugees on the planet is heartbreaking. Currently, 10.4 million displaced refugees are under the care of the United Nations.<sup>41</sup> Refugees are different from typical immigrants. According to the United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR), “Refugees are people who have been forced to sever links with their home country. They cannot rely on their own governments for legal protection; it is this, which distinguishes refugees from other migrants.”<sup>42</sup> The circumstances that force refugees to flee their countries often involve tragic events like war and famine. Refugees often live in camps set up by the U.N. where survival is difficult. Approximately 1 percent of these people will have the opportunity to be relocated to a host country. Host countries agree to take in, protect, and provide assistance to incoming refugees. Due to the open posture of the United States and Canada, over 70 percent of the refugees resettled by the United Nations relocate to North America.<sup>43</sup> Affordable housing, available jobs, and religious freedom make North America a preferred destination for refugees. Over the past ten years, the United States has resettled over five hundred

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<sup>40</sup>“American Green Card: Diversity Lottery Program,” *American Visitor Bureau*, <http://www.visabureau.com/america/green-card.aspx> (accessed October 1, 2012).

<sup>41</sup>“UNHCR Global Trends 2011,” *UNHCR*, <http://www.unhcr.org/4fd6f87f9.html> (accessed October 1, 2012).

<sup>42</sup>“Partnership: An Operations Management Handbook for UNHCR’s Partners,” *UNHCR*, <http://www.unhcr.org/4a39f7706.html> (accessed October 1, 2012).

<sup>43</sup>“UNHCR Global Trends 2011,” *UNHCR*, <http://www.unhcr.org/4fd6f87f9.html> (accessed October 1, 2012).

thousand refugees. The countries of origin with the most resettled refugees include Burma, Bhutan, Iraq, and Somali. However, refugees have been resettled from over one hundred different countries.<sup>44</sup> Canada has resettled refugees from at least 70 different countries. They are expanding their refugee relocation program with the hopes of resettling at least 14,500 refugees a year by 2013.<sup>45</sup> According to the Canadian Department of Citizenship and Immigration, Canada is committed to continuing its role as a global leader in the refugee protection and resettlement effort. The level of ethnic diversity increases in North America with the arrival of each refugee. Ethnic diversity is thus certain to rise as the United States and Canada continue their role as the global leaders in refugee resettlement.

### **International Workers**

Both the United States and Canada realize that to compete in a global market they need to attract international business leaders. In addition, they need temporary, low-wage workers that can fill skill-shortage areas. Both the United States and Canada offer thousands of temporary work visas each year. The Canadian government affirms that over 150,000 international laborers come to work in Canada each year.<sup>46</sup> The temporary visas from both countries are typically valid for ninety days. They can, however, be renewed multiple times through a simple process. While in North America, temporary workers can build relationships that help them become permanent residents. Employers, moreover, can appeal for their permanent residency if they are exceptional workers.

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<sup>44</sup>“Yearbook of Immigration Statistics, 2011,” Department of Homeland Security, <http://www.dhs.gov/yearbook-immigration-statistics> (accessed October 1, 2012).

<sup>45</sup>“The Refugee System in Canada, June 19, 2008,” Government of Canada, Citizenship, and Immigration Canada, <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/canada.asp> (accessed October 1, 2011).

<sup>46</sup>“Working temporarily in Canada,” Government of Canada, Citizenship, and Immigration Canada, <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/work/index.asp> (accessed October 1, 2012).

Likewise, international businessmen are encouraged to pursue permanent residency in North America. The United States uses an Investment Green Card program to attract international business leaders. Every year the United States offers ten thousand visas to immigrants that invest at least \$500,000 to start a business that remains open for at least two years. At the end of the two years, if they meet the requirements, immigrants receive a Green Card and are encouraged to pursue citizenship.<sup>47</sup> Several other programs exist to cultivate international business partnerships. The presence of international business leaders and temporary workers increase the ethnic diversity of North America. Hence, ethnic diversity is certain to rise as long as the United States and Canada remain major players in the global marketplace.

### **International Students**

The recruitment of international students by North American universities is another reason why diversity is on the rise in the United States and Canada. Canada, for example, boasts over ninety thousand international students.<sup>48</sup> The United States has over seven hundred thousand international students.<sup>49</sup> These international students provide a significant financial boost to both countries. According to the U.S. Department of Commerce, international students contribute twenty-one billion dollars of revenue to the American economy annually.<sup>50</sup> The largest sending countries include China, India,

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<sup>47</sup>American Visa Bureau, "Investment Green Card: EB5 Visa FAQ," <http://www.visabureau.com/america/eb5-visa.aspx> (accessed October 1, 2012).

<sup>48</sup>"Studying in Canada, March 31, 2007," Government of Canada, Citizenship, and Immigration Canada, <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/study/index.asp> (accessed October 1, 2012).

<sup>49</sup>"International Student Enrollment Increased by 5 Percent in 2010/11," Institute of International Education, <http://www.iie.org/Who-We-Are/News-and-Events/Press-Center/Press-Releases/2011/2011-11-14-Open-Doors-International-Students> (accessed October 1, 2012).

South Korea, Taiwan, Saudi Arabia, and Japan. Students come from over one hundred different countries. Most students may only be in North America for a short time; however, they contribute to the diversity of North America in significant ways. They help prepare North American students to function in a globalized world. They help establish international business partnerships. In addition, many of them remain in North America if they get hired by a company or marry a national. Whether they stay or return home, the steady flow of international students helps guarantee the rise of ethnic diversity in North America.

### **Illegal Immigration**

The most controversial pathway to residency in North America is through illegal immigration. Some argue that illegal immigrants are needed for low-wage jobs that Americans refuse to do. Others argue that illegal immigrants are criminals that need to be prosecuted and deported. The issue becomes more complex as illegal immigrants have children in North America. The children of illegal immigrants become citizens at birth; however, the parents could be deported at any time. The sheer number of illegal immigrants in America makes addressing the issue difficult. The Department of Homeland Security estimates that there are 10.8 million illegal immigrants in America,<sup>51</sup> the majority of whom come from South America, Central America, and Mexico. The steady flow of immigrants from these regions explains why Hispanics are now the largest minority group in America.<sup>52</sup> The number of illegal immigrants is considerably less in

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<sup>50</sup>“Economic Impact of International Students,” Institute of International Education, <http://www.iie.org/Research-and-Publications/Open-Doors/Data/Special-Reports/Economic-Impact-of-International-Students> (October 1, 2012).

<sup>51</sup>“Estimates of the Unauthorized Immigrant Population Residing in the United States: January 2011,” Department of Homeland Security, <http://www.dhs.gov/estimates-unauthorized-immigrant-population-residing-united-states-january-2011> (accessed October 1, 2012).



Canada. According to Professor Christopher Maule of Carleton University, between 63,000 and 500,000 illegal immigrants reside in Canada. He explains that the wide gap between the two estimates is caused by the lack of reliable data on illegal immigrants in Canada.<sup>53</sup> Both America and Canada struggle to maintain reliable data on illegal immigrants. Illegal immigrants try to avoid being counted. They live in fear of deportation. Even still, because they live and work in North America, their presence increases ethnic diversity.

### **Summary of North American Ethnic Diversity**

Currently, minority groups make up 35 percent of the population in North America.<sup>54</sup> The percentage is certain to increase as more foreign-born immigrants relocate to North America through the pathways discussed above. Ethnic diversity will increase in North America until there is no clear majority group. Whites will become a minority along with the other ethnic groups. Frey argues that the demographic tipping point that will lead to this reality has already been reached:

The latest wave of 2010 Census data, released this week, confirms what earlier surveys have strongly hinted: virtually half of recent births in the U.S. are minorities. We are becoming a more globalized nation than most Americans have experienced in their lifetimes. The great demographic change has potential long-term benefits for our population growth in terms of our economic competitiveness in the international marketplace. But these changes, coming so quickly and evolving from the “bottom up” of our age structure, may exacerbate existing cultural generation gaps, as older, largely white generations may be slow to recognize the promise of this change.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>52</sup>Frey, “Melting Pot Cities and Suburbs.”

<sup>53</sup>Christopher Maule, “Illegal Means Illegal,” Immigration Watch Canada, <http://www.immigrationwatchcanada.org/2009/08/11/illegal-means-illegal> (accessed October 1, 2012).

<sup>54</sup>Frey, “Melting Pot Cities and Suburbs.”

The birthrate among minorities guarantees that North America will experience a significant increase in ethnic diversity for years to come. As it becomes more diverse, North America will look and sound different than it does now. The change may be slow, but it is certain. Institutions that see the change coming and embrace ethnic diversity will survive while institutions that fail to see the importance of ethnic diversity will struggle. Increasing levels of ethnic diversity will present both challenges and opportunities to institutions like the SBC. Hence, the way the SBC responds to increasing levels of ethnic diversity will influence the health and effectiveness of the denomination.

### **Southern Baptist Ethnic Diversity**

Anyone who has spent much time among Southern Baptists, especially in the Southern United States, realizes that the denomination is predominately white. A visit to most any national, state, or associational meeting will prove this point. However, concern over the lack of ethnic diversity within the SBC is growing. A brief look at the roots of the SBC reveals why embracing diversity is a challenge for many Southern Baptists. An overview of the past forty years reveals some encouraging and distressing signs related to the growing concern over ethnic diversity. Current trends among Southern Baptists, however, provide hope that they can adapt to the changing climate in North America. Daniel Akin affirms that “Southern Baptists have a hopeful future if our denomination at all levels begins to reflect the demographic and racial makeup of our nation and the nations.”<sup>56</sup> The connection between the SBCs’ promising future and its embracing of ethnic diversity is a sobering thought. Southern Baptists have a significant

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<sup>55</sup>William Frey, “Increasing Share of Minority Births in United States Signals New Demographic Tipping Point,” [http://www.brookings.edu/opinions/2011/0826\\_census\\_race\\_frey.aspx](http://www.brookings.edu/opinions/2011/0826_census_race_frey.aspx) (accessed October 1, 2012).

<sup>56</sup>Daniel Akin, “The Future of the Southern Baptist Convention,” in *Southern Baptists, Evangelicals, and the Future of Denominationalism*, ed. David S. Dockery, Ray Van Neste, and Jerry Tidwell (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2011), 270.

challenge to confront. The following overview of the roots, the recent past, and the current progress of the SBC regarding ethnic diversity below reveals the size and scope of this challenge.

### **Southern Baptist Roots**

Historically, Anglos have always dominated the SBC. The denomination formed in 1845 in Augusta, Georgia. The denomination has grown to include over 16 million people that worship in over 45,000 congregations scattered across North America. However, 76.3 percent of Southern Baptists still reside in the South.<sup>57</sup> The strong Southern roots of the denomination help explain why Southern Baptists have been slow to embrace diversity. Akin explains, “Southern Baptists were born, in part, out of a racist context and have a racist heritage. That will forever be to our shame. To deny or ignore this is foolish and dishonest. By God’s grace and the Spirit’s conviction, we publically repented of this sin in 1995 on our 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary, but there is still much work to be done.”<sup>58</sup>

The racist heritage of the SBC explains why many Southern Baptists fought against civil liberties for African-Americans. No excuse exists for why it took Southern Baptists 150 years to repent of this sin.

Sadly, the pride and prejudice that justifies the evil acts of slavery and segregation die slowly. Sinful attitudes toward minorities still persist in some pockets of SBC life. Many Southern Baptists simply fail to see the need for ethnic diversity within

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<sup>57</sup>“2007 Religious Landscape Survey,” Pew Research Center <http://www.pewforum.org/FormPage.aspx?ekfrm=155> (accessed October 15, 2012).

<sup>58</sup>Akin, “The Future of the Southern Baptist Convention,” 270.

the convention. Fortunately, the SBCs' past does not determine its future. Events over the past forty years reveal that ethnic diversity is a growing concern in the SBC.

### **Recent Past**

Each year the SBC gathers for an annual meeting to conduct the business of the denomination. Resolutions are made that call Southern Baptists to engage in particular activities. As early as 1973, a resolution was issued to call Southern Baptists to involve ethnic minorities in all areas of denominational life and leadership. Similar resolutions followed in 1974, 1983, 1986, and 2008.<sup>59</sup> The resolutions reveal a concern for ethnic diversity and language ministry. Stetzer even admits that “Southern Baptists are known for their emphasis on language church work.”<sup>60</sup> Stetzer points to the ministry of Oscar Romo to verify his claim. Romo led the language ministry department for the Home Mission Board in the 1990s. In 1993, he published *American Mosaic: Church Planting in Ethnic America*. His words from almost twenty years ago still ring true. He writes,

It would be well for us, as we continue through the 1990's to remember once again that the United States is a nation of immigrants, a tapestry of cultures and traditions and languages. Americans must respect this heritage and build on it; for in so doing, we will not only create a stronger Southern Baptist Convention but will also come closer to building the true multi-ethnic kingdom of God on earth.<sup>61</sup>

The resolutions related to ethnic diversity and the insights from leaders like Romo indicate that Southern Baptists have been aware of the need for greater ethnic diversity within the SBC for many years. Unfortunately, being aware of the need for ethnic diversity is not the same as encouraging it.

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<sup>59</sup>Past resolutions from the annual meeting of the SBC can be found at [www.sbc.net/resolutions](http://www.sbc.net/resolutions).

<sup>60</sup>Stetzer, “SBC Decline and Demographic Change,” 15.

<sup>61</sup>Romo, *American Mosaic*, 16.

Each year Southern Baptist churches are asked to complete an annual church profile that provides data regarding church demographics. In 1990, churches were asked to identify the largest ethnic group in their church for the first time. In 1993, the Home Mission Board released a report titled *Racial/Ethnic Diversity in the Southern Baptist Convention*. The report revealed that “Anglos (white, non-Hispanics) comprise the largest group in 94 percent of the churches. For the remaining 6 percent of SBC churches, 3 percent are predominantly Black, 2 percent are Hispanic, 1 percent are Native American, and 1 percent are Asian/Pacific Islander.”<sup>62</sup> The report indicated that ethnic minorities might be present in the majority white churches. However, the SBC had no mechanism to measure the ethnic diversity within each congregation. The report was able to prove that 30 percent of new churches that joined the SBC from 1985 to 1992 were non-Anglo churches.<sup>63</sup> Hence, the report claims that Southern Baptist made some strides toward ethnic diversity in the late 1980s and early 1990s. However, the overwhelming presence of majority white churches in the SBC at the close of the twentieth century affirms the concern that an ethnic diversity gap still exists between North America and the SBC.

The statistics marginally improved at the start of the twenty-first century. In 2000, Southern Baptists published a study titled *Southern Baptist Congregations Today*. The study examined the demographic make-up of over 700 SBC churches. The research effort included a questionnaire that was far more detailed than the Annual Church Profile. The research team described the diversity of the SBC at the turn of the century as follows:

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<sup>62</sup>Clay Price, *Research Report: Racial/Ethnic Diversity in the Southern Baptist Convention* (Atlanta: Home Mission Board, 1993), 3.

<sup>63</sup>*Ibid.*, 1.

Southern Baptist congregations are predominantly White. Nine of 10 Southern Baptist congregations are racially/ethnically predominantly White, i.e., in 92.1 percent of the congregations, Whites (non-Hispanic) comprise more than half the adult participants. Hispanics are the predominant ethnic group in 2.7 percent of Southern Baptist congregations while Asians are the predominant group in 1.3 percent of congregations. A little over a fourth (27.2%) of Southern Baptist congregations have Hispanic adult participants and almost a fourth (23.3%) have African-American participants. In all, there are an estimated 4.9 million adults that regularly participate in Southern Baptist congregations. About 4.5 million of these adults are White (non-Hispanic), the remaining 400,000 are non-White. Of these 400,000, about 138,000 are Hispanic, 124,000 are African-American, and 65,000 are Asian.<sup>64</sup>

Similar results are reflected in the 2001 U.S. Congregational Life Survey. The 2001 survey reveals that only 2.7 percent of Southern Baptists speak a language other than English at home and only 3.3 percent of Southern Baptists are foreign-born. The low percentage of foreign-born Southern Baptists is significant when compared to the rising number of foreign-born Americans.<sup>65</sup> From 1990 to 2000, foreign-born immigrants grew by 57 percent in America.<sup>66</sup> The recent past of the SBC thus affirms the need for sincere concern over its lack of ethnic diversity.

### **Current Progress**

The SBC continues to be dominated by Anglos. However, the convention is placing greater emphasis on ethnic diversity than ever before and is taking practical steps to close the diversity gap. The most notable action revolves around the election of Fred Luter as the President of the SBC during the summer of 2012. Luter is the first non-white leader to serve in this capacity. The election of an African-American SBC president made news headlines around North America. The Washington Post reported, “Although

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<sup>64</sup>Phillip Jones, *Research Report: Southern Baptist Congregations Today* (Alpharetta, GA: North American Mission Board, 2001), 5.

<sup>65</sup>“U.S. Congregational Life Survey, 2001, Southern Baptist Attendees,” <http://www.thearda.com/Archive/Files/Descriptions/USCLSBA.asp> (accessed October 10, 2012).

<sup>66</sup>U.S. Bureau of the Census, “The Newly Arrived Foreign-Born Population of the United States: 2010,” [http://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/foreignborn\\_population/cb11-tps45.html](http://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/foreignborn_population/cb11-tps45.html) (accessed October 1, 2012).

the Southern Baptist Convention remains a predominantly white organization of 45,000 congregations, the election of Fred Luter Jr. to a one-year term as president sparked hopes among Baptists in more progressive circles that diversity would trickle down through the leadership ranks.”<sup>67</sup> Luter is committed to seeing the trickle down effect occur. In an interview with Baptist Press, Luter states, “If we stop appointing African Americans or Asians or Hispanics to leadership roles in this convention after my term is over, we failed. We absolutely failed.”<sup>68</sup> Luter’s commitment to celebrating diversity is significant. Yet, other examples of SBC actions at the annual meeting are worth noting.

In 2009, a motion was passed that recommended the Executive Committee study how ethnic minorities could be more involved in the convention. The motion resulted in a two-year study of ethnicity and diversity in the SBC. During the 2011 annual meeting, the recommendations of the study group were announced. The recommendations included ten practical steps that the SBC should take to encourage ethnic diversity in all areas of denominational life. One step included appointing ethnic pastors to prominent leadership roles in the SBC. Another asked all Baptist entities to report their efforts to diversify their ministries. The recommendation concluded with these words:

The Executive Committee further recommends the Southern Baptist Convention strongly encourage church workers and leaders from all ethnic backgrounds within Southern Baptist life to involve themselves to the highest level possible in associational life and through state convention ministries so that their participation in broader denominational life becomes the platform from which their greater involvement in visible roles of leadership in the Convention will naturally follow.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>67</sup>“Southern Baptists Elect a Black Leader and Raise Hopes for Increased Diversity,” [http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/southern-baptists-elect-a-black-leader-and-raise-hopes-for-increased-diversity/2012/06/21/gJQANI4FwV\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/southern-baptists-elect-a-black-leader-and-raise-hopes-for-increased-diversity/2012/06/21/gJQANI4FwV_story.html) (accessed October 1, 2012).

<sup>68</sup>“Luter Sees ‘Genuine’ Open Door for Ethnic Groups,” *Baptist Press* <http://www.bpnews.net/bpnews.asp?ID=38091> (accessed October 12, 2012).

<sup>69</sup>*Annual of the 2011 Southern Baptist Convention* (Nashville: B&H, 2011), 71.

Hence, barriers between ethnic leaders and positions of influence in the SBC are being torn down as the convention strives desperately to be more diverse. Further evidence of the convention's desire to embrace diversity is also evidenced by the recent activities of the North American Mission Board.

Within the SBC, the greatest burden to address the diversity gap falls upon the North American Mission Board. NAMB has been charged with the task of penetrating lostness in North America. Several trends within NAMB indicate a strong emphasis on ethnic church planting. NAMB continues to partially fund ethnic church planters and intercultural missionaries. It is now working in partnership with the IMB to identify and map under-served and unreached people groups throughout North America. The data that is being used to expose need and drive strategy is stored on the following website: [www.usapeoplegroups.com](http://www.usapeoplegroups.com). In addition, NAMB continues to maintain the website [www.peoplegroups.info](http://www.peoplegroups.info), which allows people to search for ethnic groups in their state, city, county, or zip code. Both websites contain evangelistic resources designed to equip Southern Baptist to break down cultural and linguistic barriers to plant churches. Other intercultural resources are located at NAMB's website—[www.churchplantingvillage.net](http://www.churchplantingvillage.net). A person can find over 140 people portraits of under-served ethnic groups in North America here. Each people portrait describes the history, religious background, and opportunities to serve a particular people group. Furthermore, the website includes a tremendous amount of resources designed to help Southern Baptists understand different world religions and intercultural evangelism techniques. The intentionality of NAMB to collect and share so many intercultural resources indicates their desire to see the diversity gap in North America close as more ethnic groups are reached for Jesus. A sizable challenge remains, however, that will require constant attention to further steps that NAMB can take to confront the challenge of ethnic diversity.



## **Conclusion**

So what can one learn from exploring the roots, recent past, and current progress of embracing ethnic diversity within the SBC? First, a significant gap does exist between the ethnic diversity of North America and the SBC. The gap is growing wider as diversity in North America accelerates and Southern Baptists struggle to keep up. Stetzer writes, “We are simply not keeping pace with this demographic change. As the contours of the U.S. population changes, the Southern Baptist Convention will continue to decline if we are not better equipped and engaged in reaching immigrant populations.”<sup>70</sup> Hence, closing the diversity gap will require much work. Southern Baptists must build upon recent achievements and continue embracing ethnic diversity.

The size and scope of the task before Southern Baptists points to the significance of domestic intercultural missionaries. The missionaries have a strategic role to play in reaching diverse ethnic groups and multiplying the diversity within the SBC. Hence, the significance of intercultural missions increases exponentially as ethnic diversity changes the climate of North America. Not only are more missionaries needed, but the current missionaries need support and care so they can remain focused and effective in the trenches of North American missions. It is true that Southern Baptists must diversify or diminish and thus intercultural missionaries have a significant role to the long-term health of the SBC.

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<sup>70</sup>Stetzer, “SBC Decline and Demographic Change,” 18.

## CHAPTER 3

### CONDITIONS AND CHALLENGES: RESEARCH RESULTS

Soldiers who risk their lives for others are the most important resources in battle. Knowing the condition they are in and the challenges they face is essential to provide the support needed to win. The previous chapter introduced readers to the necessity of engaging North America's growing ethnic population. The purpose of the following two chapters is to introduce readers to the soldiers or intercultural missionaries of the Southern Baptist Convention. Chapter 3 presents the data gleaned from the surveys the missionaries completed. The chapter is characterized by numbers, percentages, and basic observations. The interpretation of the data follows in chapter 4. Observations from field research and quotes from missionaries are used to help interpret the data. Both chapters paint a picture of the conditions and challenges of intercultural missionaries who are on the frontlines engaging the nations in North America.

As mentioned in chapter 1, the exact number of Southern Baptists who consider themselves intercultural missionaries is unknown. An effort was made, however, to identify a significant number of intercultural missionaries from various regions in North America. Each missionary was asked to identify other missionaries that could participate in the study and the snowball sampling process resulted in approximately 112 missionaries participating in the study. Each missionary completed an extensive survey that explored how they were doing, the challenges they were facing, and their insights for

improving care for intercultural missionaries serving in North America. Over 40 missionaries participated in follow-up interviews, which complimented the survey. Further information was gleaned from field research, which provided high levels of interaction with the missionaries. The missionaries had powerful stories to share of God's grace and provision. They were open about their struggles and fears. Each missionary provided a unique glimpse into the frontline warfare that is occurring among the nations in North America.

Again, the focus of this chapter is to present the data gleaned from the intercultural missionaries that participated in the study. The introduction follows the pattern of the survey that the missionaries completed. After an overview of the demographic characteristics of the missionaries, a summary of their spiritual, physical, emotional, and financial condition is presented. The overview of their condition is followed by an overview of the challenges that the missionaries face. Their assessment of care received from Southern Baptist entities concludes the chapter.

### **Demographic Overview**

The North American Mission Board (NAMB) divides North America into five regions: the South, Northeast, Midwest, West, and Canada. The South region is the most populous region, with over 106,000,000 people. The South includes three of the Southern Baptist seminaries and the headquarters for both NAMB and the International Mission Board (IMB). Over 13 million Southern Baptists reside in the South. These factors help explain why 47 participants came from the South region. The Midwest region had the second highest number of participants with 31 missionaries taking part in the study. The West and the Northeast regions each produced 11 missionaries that

participated in the study and the Canadian region produced 12 missionaries.<sup>71</sup>

Overall, 71 percent of the missionaries were male and 29 percent were female. A little over 75 percent of the missionaries were married, and 70 percent of them had children. Most of the missionaries would qualify as young. In fact, 61 percent were below the age of 40. Approximately, 30 percent of the missionaries were in their 40s or 50s. Only 8 percent of the missionaries were 60 years of age or older. The missionaries were well educated. Almost 95 percent of the missionaries had completed college and nearly 70 percent had completed some type of graduate work. A little over 60 percent of the missionaries had served cross-culturally in North America for less than 4 years. Almost 30 percent had between 5 and 10 years of cross-cultural missions experience. Only 9 percent of the missionaries had more than 10 years of North American missions experience. Hence, a general description of the majority of missionaries that participated in the study could include the following descriptors: married, young, and well educated.

Southern Baptist churches come in all shapes and sizes. Many Southern Baptist churches have fewer than 100 members. Hence, it is no surprise that almost 50 percent of the missionaries were members of small Southern Baptist churches. A little over 30 percent of the missionaries attended medium size churches with a membership between 100 and 600 people. Only 18 percent of the missionaries attended larger churches with memberships of more than 600 people. Only 9 missionaries came from 2,000 member mega-churches.

One of the most important details that affects the lives of missionaries relates to their level of funding. Only 10 percent of the missionaries were fully funded by a

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<sup>71</sup>See [www.namb.net/regions](http://www.namb.net/regions) for further statistical data concerning the NAMB regions.

Southern Baptist entity like NAMB or a state convention. Fortunately, 30 percent of the missionaries received some type of partial financial support from a Southern Baptist entity. However, this partial support was often temporary. Hence, the majority of missionaries were tentmakers, bi-vocational, or raised their own support.<sup>72</sup> In 15 percent of the missionary homes, one spouse worked so the other could serve full-time. The small number of fully and partially funded missionaries helps explain why almost 50 percent of the missionaries serve 30 hours or less in a typical ministry week. Fortunately, 18 percent of the missionaries were able to serve between 30 and 39 hours a week and 32 percent of the missionaries were able to serve in a full-time capacity. The amount of hours a missionary served was directly linked to the way the missionary was funded. The topic of funding emerged as a central theme throughout the study.

A profile of the missionaries would be incomplete without an overview of the missionary's mission field. Most of the missionaries encounter a diverse group of people from various religious backgrounds. At least 70 percent of the missionaries engage Muslim people groups on a consistent basis. At least 40 percent of the missionaries engage Hindu people groups while 30 percent of the missionaries minister among Buddhist people groups. Another 20 percent of the missionaries reported engaging atheistic people or other religious groups such as the Jews, Native Americans, and secular postmoderns. Some of the specific people groups that the missionaries work among include the Somali, Nepali, Saudi, Burmese, Burundi, Chinese, Japanese, Bosniak, Wolof,

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<sup>72</sup>The term *tentmaker* refers to missionaries who have full-time professions other than their missionary work. Tentmakers choose to earn a living through outside employment rather than through raising personal financial support. Bi-vocational missionaries often work part-time or full-time and raise financial support to subsidize their ministries.

Indian, Iranian, Iraqi, Vietnamese, and Turks. A significant portion of the missionaries worked with refugees. Other missionaries focused on engaging international students or international professionals working in North America. It is important to note that most missionaries focus on more than one people group at a time. Most serve in urban, multi-ethnic settings where multiple languages are spoken and many cultures are represented. The level of diversity encountered by the missionaries adds to the complexity of their work.

### **Condition of Missionaries**

The process of developing a strategy to improve missionary care begins with learning how the intercultural missionaries are doing. Assessing the condition of intercultural missionaries, however, is difficult. Each missionary is at a different place in his or her journey through life and each faces a unique set of circumstances. Further, missionaries cannot be judged by a universal standard of health. An authoritative diagnosis on the condition of the missionaries is thus difficult to produce.

The purpose of ethnographic research is to see and understand the world from the perspective of the people studied. Exploring how they see themselves is the focus of the study as opposed to diagnosing their true level of health. Hence, each missionary was asked to assess their own condition in the categories of their spiritual, physical, emotional, and financial life. Missionaries were asked to rate how well they were doing in general topics under each category. The missionaries were then asked to rate their overall level of health in each category. Each section concludes by asking missionaries to describe

whether their missionary role had a positive, negative, or neutral affect on that part of their lives. The combined responses of all the missionaries paint a picture of how our front-line intercultural missionaries are doing.

### **Spiritual Condition**

Missionaries were asked to evaluate seven areas related to their spiritual lives. The areas included their prayer life, Scripture reading, fasting, fellowship with church family, pursuit of holiness, evangelism, and taking a day of rest. The table below presents the weighted average of the missionaries' responses regarding their spiritual lives. The two strongest areas for missionaries were their fellowship with church family and their pursuit of holiness. The two weakest areas were fasting and taking a day of rest. The missionaries rated themselves as average or above in all categories except for fasting.

When asked to evaluate their overall relationship with Jesus, 72.4 percent of the missionaries indicated that they had a strong or very strong relationship with Jesus. No missionaries rated their personal relationship with Jesus below average. In addition, 92 percent of missionaries indicated that their missionary roles had a positive effect on their spiritual lives. Only 8 percent of the missionaries reported that their missionary roles had a negative or neutral impact on their spiritual lives. The participants who reported that their missionary role had a negative effect on their spiritual life referenced the spiritual attacks and oppression they have experienced while sharing Jesus with unreached ethnic groups. Constant business and fatigue also had a negative effect on their spiritual health. However, the majority of missionaries articulated how the challenges they face in missionary service enhance their spiritual lives by compelling them to pray more and cling to God for strength. Multiple missionaries acknowledged

they could accomplish nothing in their own strength. Hence, the themes of prayer, desperation for God, and dependence on God emerged from the responses.

Table 1. Spiritual health responses

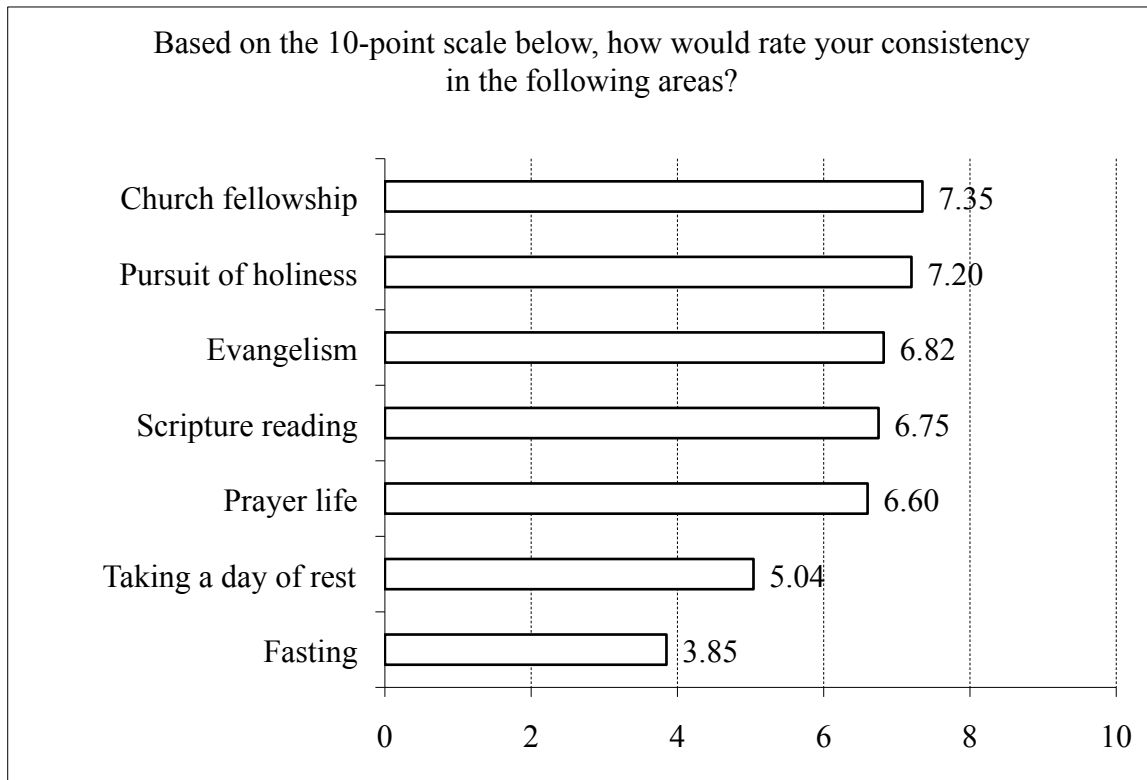
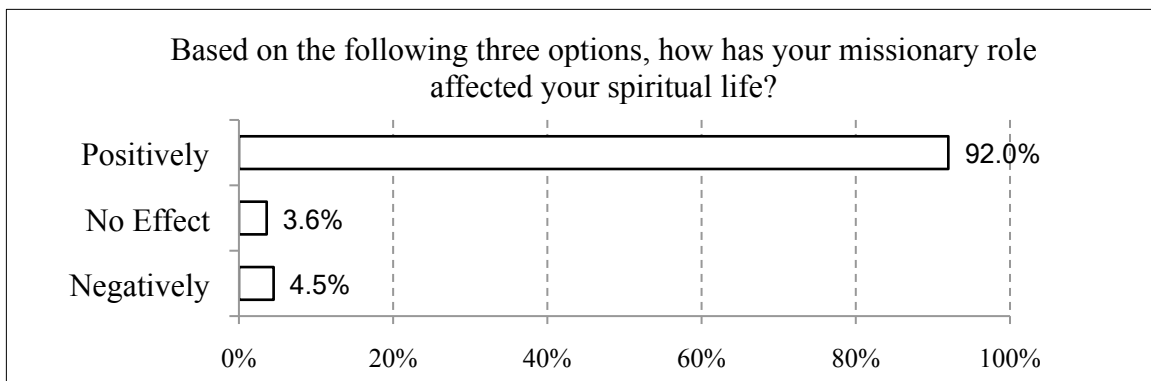


Table 2. Affect of missionary role on spiritual condition

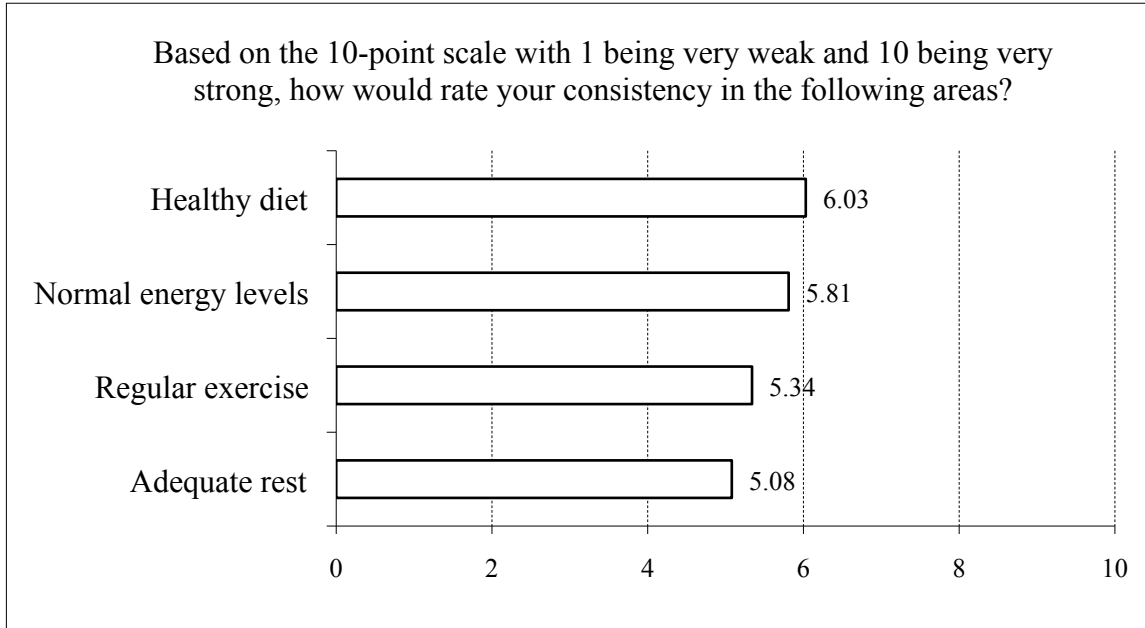




## Physical Condition

The four areas of their physical condition that missionaries were asked about included a healthy diet, adequate rest, normal energy levels, and regular exercise.

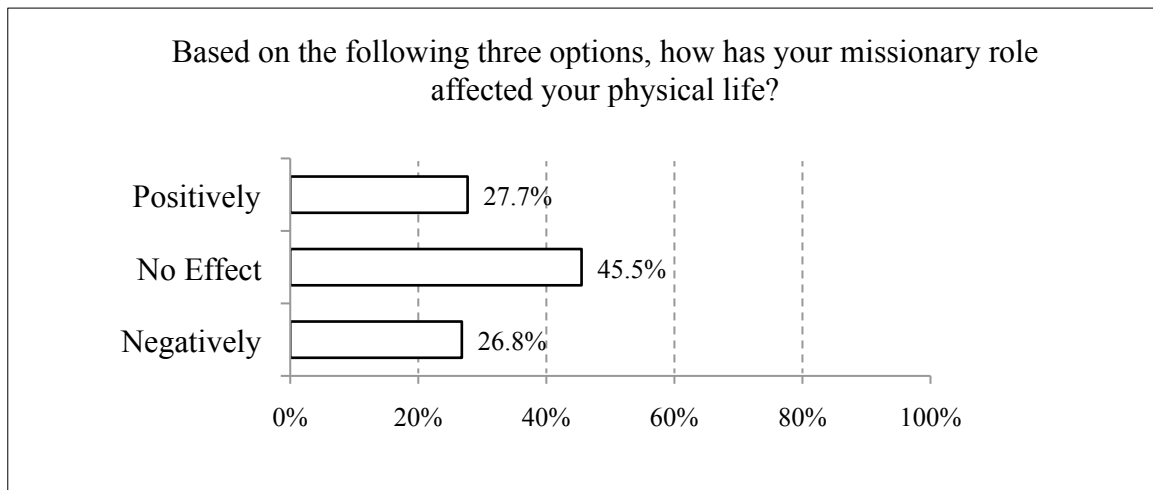
Table 3. Physical health



Maintaining adequate rest was the weakest category. Maintaining a healthy diet was the strongest category. However, the word “average” best describes the physical condition of the missionaries. The theme of “average” is evident when the missionaries were asked to rate their overall physical condition. Nearly 50 percent of the missionaries rated their overall physical condition as average. Aproximatley 25 percent of the missionaries accessed their physical condition as strong and 13 percent indicated ttthey were in very strong physical shape. Only 12 percent of the missionary indicated they were in weak or very weak physical shape. The missionaries that rated their physical condition as weak

or very weak indicated that their missionary role had very little to do with their physical health choices. The low correlation between serving as a missionary and achieving physical health is further evident when the missionaries were asked what affect their missionary role had on their physical life.

Table 4. Affect of missionary role on physical condition



Slightly more participants believed that their missionary role had a positive affect (27.7 percent) on their physical health rather than a negative one (26.8 percent). However, 45.5 percent of the missionaries reported that their roles had no effect on their physical health. The majority of missionaries indicated that they would make the same physical health choices whether they were missionaries or not. However, several themes emerged when the missionaries were asked to explain their responses to the affects that their missionary roles had on their physical health. The missionaries that selected a positive effect referenced their flexible schedules that permitted time to exercise, opportunities to play sports with their international friends, and the need to be a good

example. The missionaries that selected a negative effect referenced the financial limitations that affect food options, hectic lifestyles that often lead to poor choices related to food and rest, and the challenges of eating whatever is placed before you by your international friends.

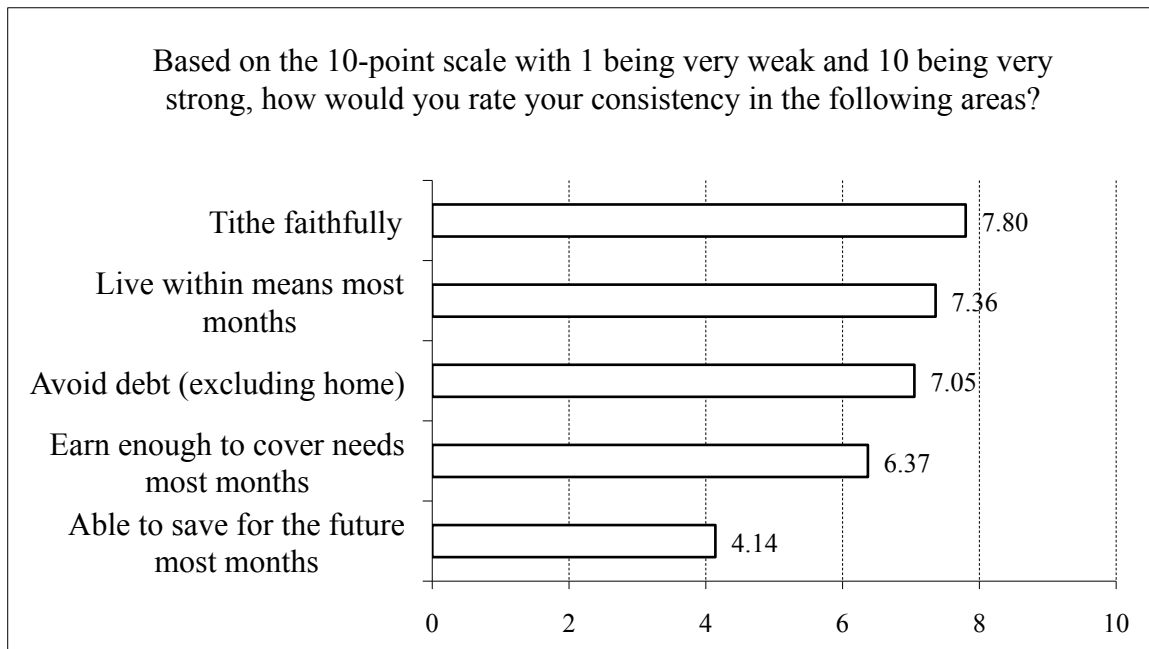
### **Financial Condition**

The five areas of their financial lives that missionaries were asked to evaluate included tithing faithfully, avoiding debt, living within one's means, earning enough to cover expenses, and saving for the future. Tithing faithfully was the strongest category. If one combines the strong and very strong categories, 76 percent of the missionaries tithe on a consistent basis. Of course, this does not mean the other missionaries do not tithe. However, they may struggle to tithe consistently on a monthly basis. Again, if one combines the strong and very strong categories, 63.5 percent of the missionaries were able to avoid debt and 68.8 percent were able to live within their means most months. These numbers indicate that as many as 30 or 40 percent of the missionaries live with some level of financial struggle regarding their ability to avoid debt and live within their means. Hence it is no surprise that only 48 percent of the missionaries make enough money to cover their needs most months. This means that a little over half of our missionaries have expenses that exceed their income. Finally, only 23 percent of our missionaries have the ability to save for future needs such as their child's education and their own retirement. Despite the small number of missionaries that are able to save for future needs, 35.8 percent of the missionaries indicated that their overall financial health was strong or very strong. Approximately, 36.6 percent of the missionaries assessed their

financial health as average and 27.7 percent of the missionaries indicated a weak or very weak financial condition.

The missionaries' responses to how their missionary roles affected their financial lives were diverse. Only 21 percent of the missionaries claimed that their role had no affect on their financial lives. Almost 30 percent of the missionaries affirmed that

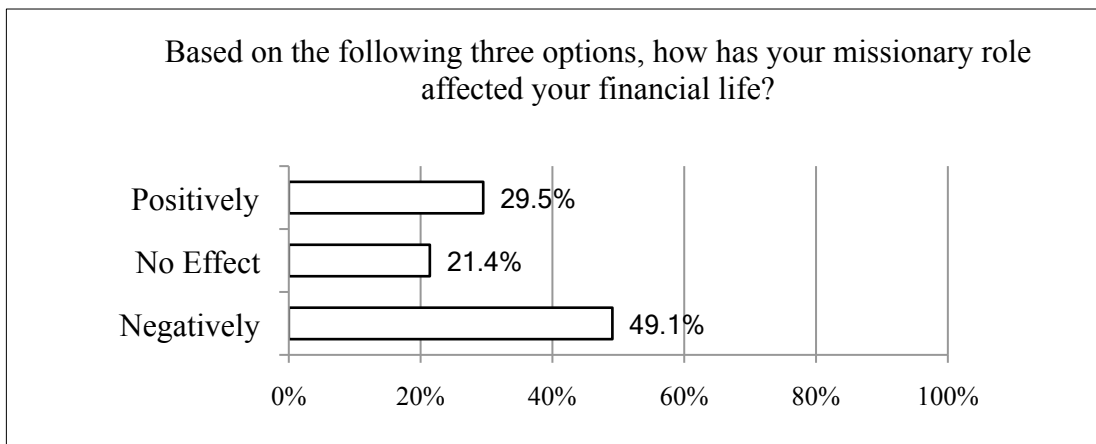
Table 5. Financial health



their missionary roles had a positive affect on their financial lives. For some participants, their small missionary salary exceeded the amount of income they received while working part-time jobs in seminary. Other missionaries received adequate salaries from Baptist entities, lived on retirement income, or had raised sufficient funds to support their ministries. However, 49 percent of missionaries indicated that their decision to pursue intercultural service in North America had a negative impact on their financial lives. The

themes of struggle and sacrifice characterized the response of these missionaries. Many of the missionaries struggle to raise financial support from churches that only give to the Cooperative Program. Furthermore, many of the missionaries live in expensive urban areas far from home and the support base of their local church. However, a deep confidence in God’s faithfulness also emerged as a dominant theme from these missionaries. The missionaries indicated that their financial struggle has increased their

Table 6. Financial health



dependence on God. Multiple missionaries reference times when God miraculously provided for their financial needs.

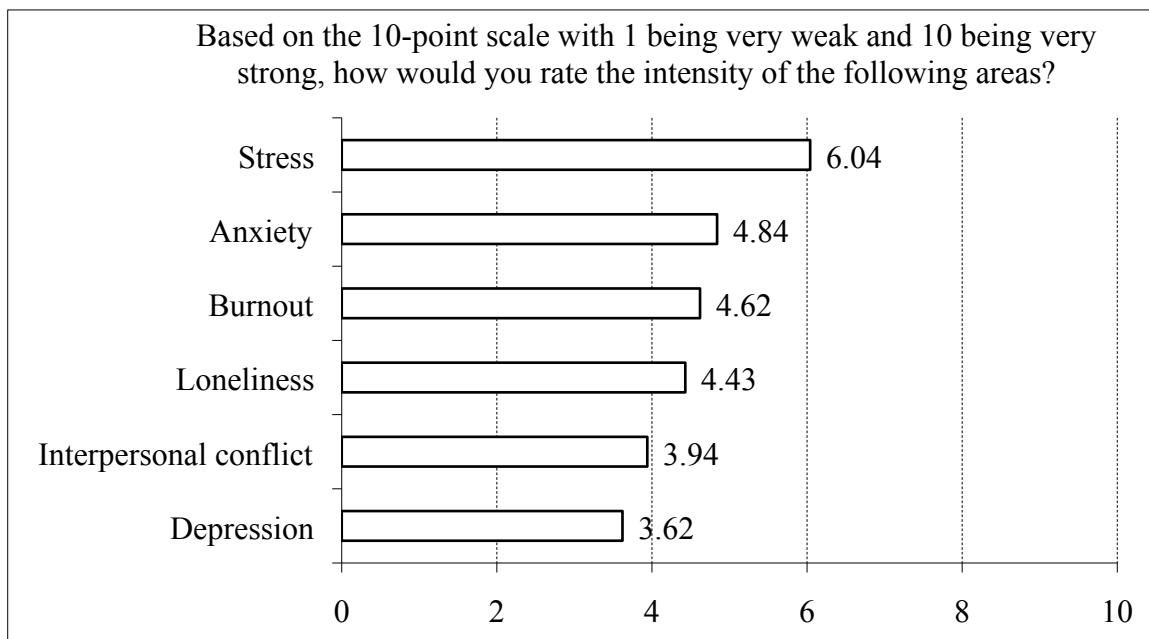
### **Emotional Condition**

Missionaries were asked two main questions about their emotional life. The first question was designed to explore the intensity of negative factors in their lives such as stress, anxiety, loneliness, interpersonal conflict, depression, and burnout. The second question was designed to explore the positive factors in their lives such as peace, joy,

contentment, confidence in Christ, and healthy relationships with others. Table 7 below illustrates how the missionaries cope with the negative factors. The missionaries ranked their stress levels as the most intense emotional factor they encounter. The majority of missionaries reported average levels of anxiety, burnout, and loneliness. Fortunately, the intensity of interpersonal conflict and depression were below average.

A trend emerges when you compare the negative and positive factors of the missionaries' emotional lives. In the previous table, most responses were average or

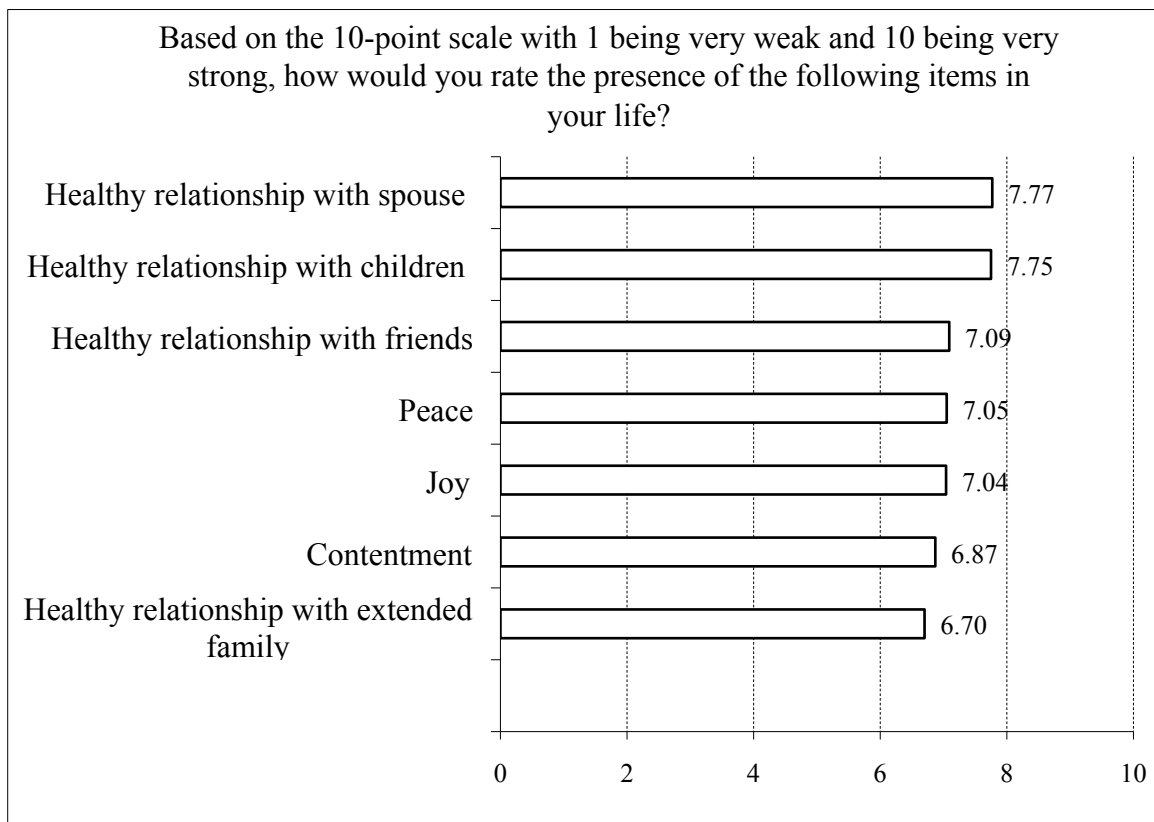
Table 7. Negative emotional factors



weak. An average or weak response to the intensity of the loneliness and burnout is better than a strong response. However, the majority of responses related to the positive emotional factors were strong or very strong. A strong response to the presence of peace and joy is of course better than a weak response. The trend was evident when one

compares table 7 and 8 and sees that the positive factors were rated higher by the missionaries than the negative ones. The comparison of tables 7 and 8 indicates the majority of missionaries are emotionally healthy. In fact, nearly 70 percent of the missionaries indicated that they had a strong or very strong sense of peace and joy. Over 80 percent of missionaries indicated that they had a strong or very strong sense of confidence in Christ. Moreover, the missionaries that were married indicated that their marriage relationship was healthy and that their relationship with their children was also healthy. None of the missionaries ranked any of the positive emotional factors as very

Table 8. Positive emotional factors

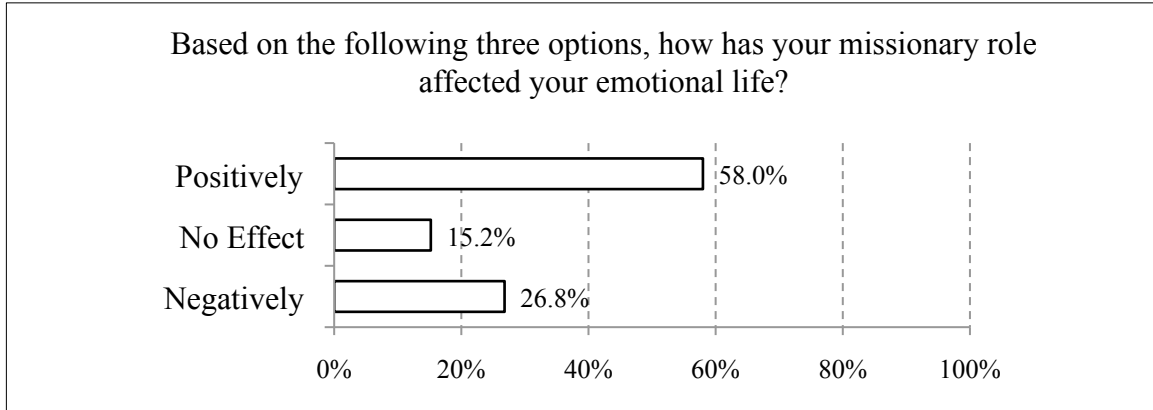


weak. The evidence for the participants strong emotional health is further reinforced by the fact that 58 percent of the missionaries assessed their overall emotional health as strong or very strong. Approximately, 30 percent of the missionaries indicated their overall emotional health was average. Only 12 percent of the missionaries indicated their emotional health was weak. No missionaries indicated their overall emotional condition was very weak.

However, strong levels of emotional health need not mean that the missionaries are free from intense struggles. Missionaries acknowledged the challenges of living with high stress levels and ministry fatigue. Yet, a significant number of missionaries indicated that the pressures of ministry push them to trust in God for strength. The tension between emotional trials and increased trust in God helps explain the participants response to how their missionary role affected their emotional life. Only 15 percent of the participants indicated that their missionary role has had no effect. Nearly 27 percent of the missionaries indicated that their missionary role had a negative impact on their emotional lives. Several missionaries who selected the negative option admitted that they were going through a difficult season. They implied that their ministry is typically filled with ups and downs, which can add to the emotional strain of intercultural service. Other missionaries who selected the negative option voiced their feelings of isolation and loneliness of serving in hard places among hard people. Several wives voiced their frustration that their husbands often get attention from denominational



Table 9. Missionary role affect on emotional health



leaders, yet the wife’s needs and hurts go unnoticed. However, approximately 58 percent of the participants indicated that serving as a missionary had a positive affect on their emotional lives. The missionaries that selected the positive affect provided ample evidence that God uses emotional trials to increase the faith of the missionaries.

Overall, Southern Baptists have much to be thankful for regarding the spiritual, physical, financial, and emotional health of their missionaries. The data in the previous section indicates that the missionaries are far from perfect, and yet they are sustained by God’s provision and power. It is now important to understand the challenges that intercultural missionaries face on the frontlines in North America.

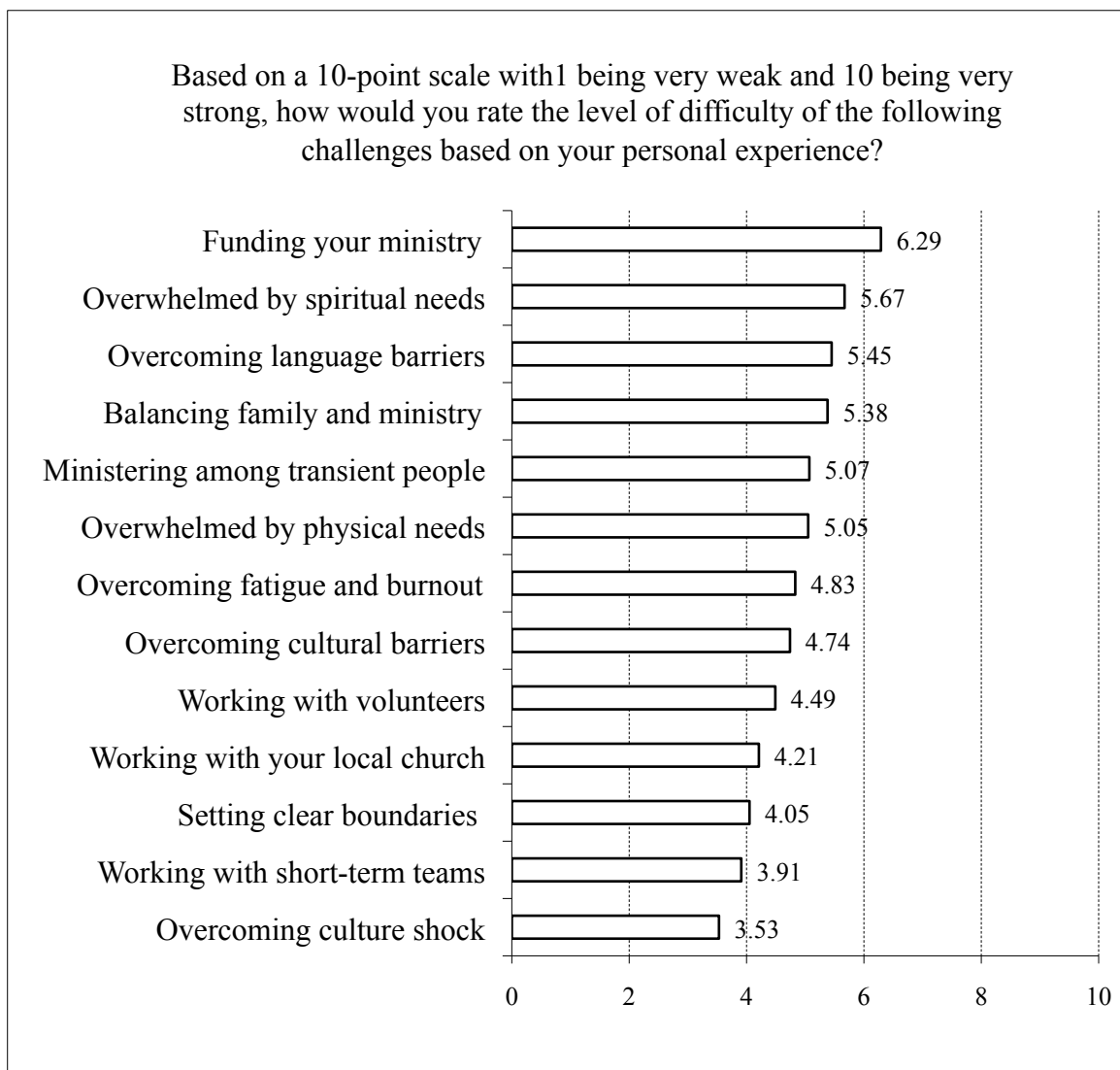
### **Challenges Faced by Intercultural Missions**

Missionaries were asked to respond to two questions on the survey about the challenges they face. The first question asked missionaries to rate the levels of difficulty of common challenges involved in cross-cultural ministry. The common challenges included issues like overcoming cultural and language barriers, working with volunteers and short-term mission teams, and feeling overwhelmed by physical and spiritual needs.

The second question asked missionaries to list their top five challenges, including options not listed in the first question. Both questions paint a picture of the challenges faced by intercultural missionaries serving in North America.

Table 10 shows the averaged responses of the first question regarding intercultural challenges.

Table 10. Missionary challenges



The top four most difficult challenges included funding one's ministry, feeling overwhelmed by spiritual needs, overcoming language barriers, and balancing family and ministry. The least difficult challenges included overcoming issues related to culture shock, working with short-term teams, and working with one's local church. It is fascinating to note that on a scale of 1 to 10, no challenge rose above an average of 7 concerning its level of difficulty.

The second question related to ministry challenges allowed missionaries to rank and articulate their top 5 challenges in their own words. The second question was designed to provide missionaries the opportunity to list challenges not included in the previous question. No two missionaries produced an identical list of top five challenges. However, multiple themes emerged from the responses. For instance, 72 missionaries listed funding in their top five challenges while only 26 missionaries listed funding as their most difficult challenge. Balancing family and ministry was another clear theme, with 67 missionaries indicating the difficulty of this challenge. The third and fourth dominant themes of team development and local church issues were similar—approximately 58 missionaries listed team development as one of their top five challenges and 54 listed local church issues in their top five challenges. The primary issues regarding team development were the lack of consistent volunteers that came from local churches. Challenges related to the local church included getting local churches to understand, affirm, and support the work of intercultural missionaries.

Overall, the responses to the second question regarding missionary challenges affirmed the data gleaned from the first question. The predictable themes of time management, language barriers, cultural barriers, burnout, and being overwhelmed by

spiritual and physical needs surfaced many times throughout the missionaries' responses. However, two distinct themes emerged that yielded new insights into the lives of the missionaries. The first theme relates to the need for contextualized training for intercultural missionaries. Several missionaries lamented that they had no training or inadequate training because the available training was focused on the needs of a traditional, North American church planter that works among his or her own people.

The second new theme revolves around the challenges related to the systems and structures of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). Multiple missionaries articulated how difficult it was to serve as intercultural missionaries within the systems of the SBC in North America. Missionaries voiced their frustration toward denominational bureaucracy, unrealistic expectations, uncertainty of long-term support, and inadequate supervision or encouragement. Missionaries acknowledged that it was difficult to serve within a system designed to support traditional church planters as opposed to intercultural missionaries.<sup>73</sup> Furthermore, there was resentment toward the pressure to produce high numbers of churches and baptisms regardless if one worked among a highly receptive people or highly resistant unreached people group. In other words, missionaries felt the pressure to produce results or get fired. In general, there appeared to be a significant disconnect between the missionaries and the support mechanisms of the SBC. All of these challenges could be considered internal challenges related to intercultural missions in North America. These internal challenges help explain the following assessment of the level of care provided for Southern Baptist intercultural missionaries.

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<sup>73</sup>The reference to traditional church planters refers to planters who attempt to plant and pastor a church among people with common language and cultural characteristics as the planter.

## **Assessment of Current Level of Care**

The final section of the survey asked the intercultural missionaries to assess how well Southern Baptist entities were caring for them. The missionaries were asked to rate their relationships with the four main levels of Southern Baptist life and to describe what is currently being done to care for them and what could be done to better care for them in the future. Finally, each missionary was asked to assign a letter grade that would best describe the overall level of care they received from Baptist entities. The responses of the missionaries to these questions paint a picture of the need to improve missionary care. Hence, each of these four questions deserves further attention.

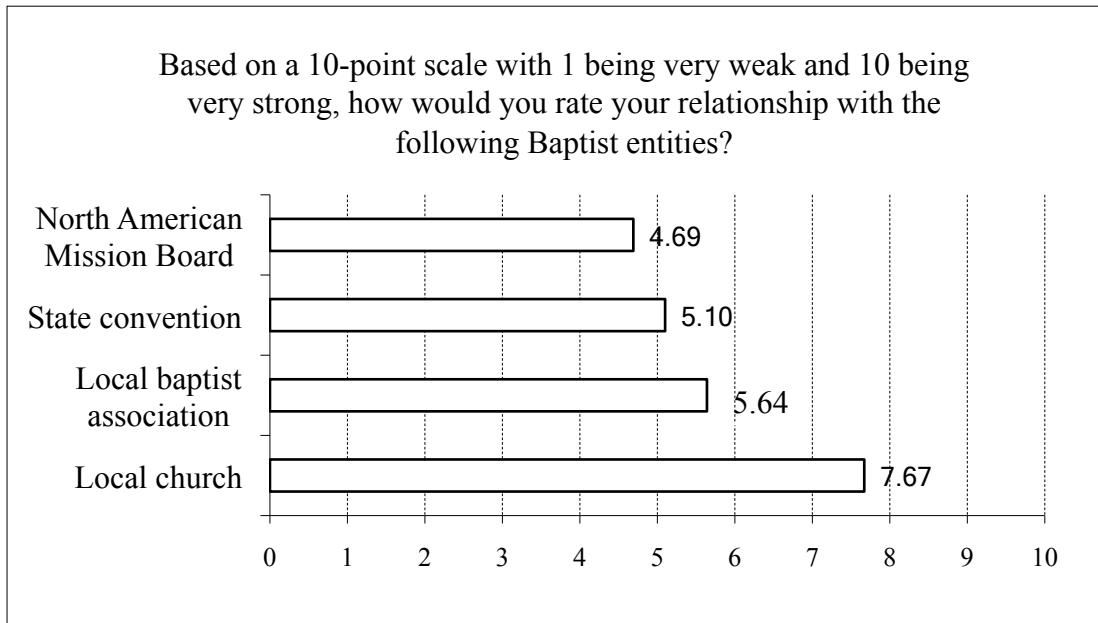
### **Relationship with Baptist Entities**

The majority of Southern Baptist life revolves around four distinct levels. The four levels include the local church, local association, state convention, and the North American Mission Board. Almost all of the missionaries included in the study had at least some interaction with all four of these levels. Table 11 describes a distinct pattern. Missionaries enjoy strong relationships with their local churches. Each subsequent Baptist entity was rated lower in relational strength by the missionaries. NAMB received the lowest marks, and they were the only entity that ranked below average overall. The data indicates there is opportunity for improvement regarding the relationship between the missionaries and the Baptist entities.

### **What is Being Done**

The missionaries were asked to describe what Southern Baptists have done to provide care for them. Most missionaries listed at least three or four ways Southern

Table 11. Quality of relationship with Baptist entity



Baptists have provided care. The most dominant theme was that of financial support. Approximately 70 missionaries indicated that they had received some type of financial support from individuals, local churches, associations, state conventions, or NAMB. The words “temporary,” “partial,” and “some” accompanied most references to financial support. The theme of financial support was followed by encouragement and prayer. Approximately 26 missionaries indicated that they felt cared for when they received encouraging phone calls, handwritten notes, and small gifts of appreciation. The theme of prayer support emerged in 23 responses. Other themes that received considerable attention included receiving ministry support through training, volunteer teams, and the provision of evangelistic material. Missionaries were also grateful for family support, member care from their local churches, supervision, seminary tuition assistance, and networking opportunities.

## **What Could Be Done**

The missionaries were also asked to describe what Southern Baptist could do to improve their level of care. Only two missionaries indicated that they were being adequately cared for and had no further suggestions for improvements. The rest of the missionaries listed multiple ways Southern Baptists could improve missionary care. The top three themes deserve special attention. The top three themes included the need for more financial support, better missionary care, and increased affirmation by Southern Baptists.

**Financial support.** Approximately 54 responses included a direct plea for more financial support. Those that appealed for more financial support often referenced the need for health insurance and the struggles of living in expensive urban centers. In addition, several missionaries requested assistance with raising their own support. Overall, the frequency in which financial support surfaced in the responses of the missionaries indicated that money was one of the primary needs among missionaries.

**Better missionary care.** The need for better missionary care appeared in 43 of the missionaries' responses. Many missionaries simply voiced their desire to be supported by their fellow Southern Baptists. Most missionaries identified ways they could be better supported. Missionaries voiced their desire for prayer, encouragement, community, volunteers, and mentorship. A significant portion of missionaries simply wanted to know that they were loved and appreciated. One missionary's simple request was that Baptist leaders remember his name. Overall, a significant portion of missionaries indicated that better care was a vital need of Southern Baptist intercultural missionaries in North America.

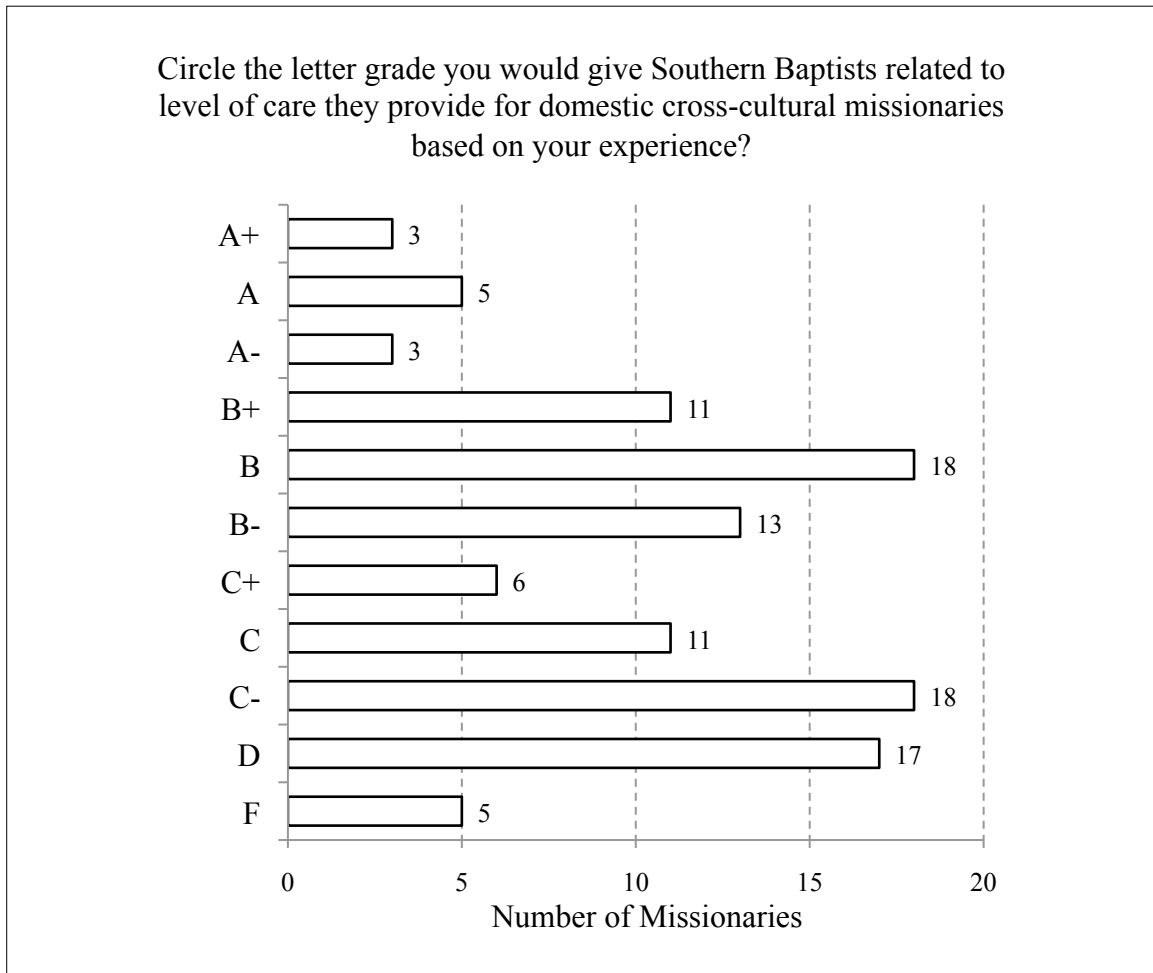
**Affirmation.** Approximately 35 missionaries voiced their desire to be better understood and affirmed by the broader Southern Baptist family. This theme is similar to the previous theme. However, the responses of the missionaries on the topic of being understood and affirmed revealed unique challenges that domestic intercultural missions face in the SBC. A significant number of the missionaries feel that local Southern Baptist churches fail to understand their challenges or affirm their ministries. For instance, the missionaries voiced their frustration that many North American churches often think that all intercultural missions takes place in a foreign country. The churches fail to see the intercultural opportunities in their own backyard. Furthermore, many churches often think that all intercultural missionaries should serve overseas. They fail to see the need for intercultural missionaries in North America. Hence, the lack of support flows from a lack of understanding and affirmation.

### **Final Grade**

Each missionary was asked to assign a letter grade to the overall care they had received from Baptist entities. Only 11 missionaries awarded the Southern Baptists an A, or A- for their efforts to care for missionaries. Approximately 42 missionaries gave the SBC a B+, B, or B-. The majority of missionaries evaluated their current level of care as a C or below, with 5 missionaries giving Southern Baptist a failing grade for missionary care. Table 12 illustrates the grades awarded by the missionaries. If you take all of the grades awarded by the missionaries and apply them to a traditional 10-point grading scale, the overall grade awarded to Southern Baptists by intercultural missionaries would be a 79 or C+.



Table 12. Letter grades



### Conclusion

The ethnographic research paints a picture of missionaries sustained by God’s grace, dependent on God’s provision, and focused on God’s mission for their lives. The missionaries provided important insights concerning the spiritual, physical, financial, and emotional challenges they face. They offered a transparent glimpse into the difficulties of serving on the frontlines in North America. Furthermore, the missionaries offered a valuable perspective regarding their assessment of missionary care and ways to improve their level of care. The purpose of this chapter was to present the data obtained from the

ethnographic research. Now, the focus shifts to interpreting the data. The interpretation of the data in chapter 4 lays the foundation for the steps to improve the level of care for intercultural missionaries.

## CHAPTER 4

### INTERPRETATION OF DATA

Communication in a combat zone can be complex. Message runners like my grandfather had to memorize military codes that helped disguise their messages. The names of landmarks, military equipment, and personnel were often changed to hide their true identity. The use of military codes required careful interpretation once the message was delivered. Military leaders were responsible for interpreting the message accurately. An accurate interpretation of the message could save lives and lead to victory. In contrast, an inaccurate interpretation of the message could cost lives and lead to defeat. Hence, interpreting the message correctly from the frontlines was crucial. Once the message was understood, steps had to be taken to support the troops that were risking their lives on the frontlines.

The previous chapter presented a large amount of numerical data gleaned from the missionaries interviewed. Attention now shifts to the significant responsibility of interpreting the data. The purpose of chapter 4 is to take a closer look at the condition and challenges of Southern Baptist intercultural missionaries. The survey each missionary completed allowed space for the participants to describe their condition and challenges in their own words. This chapter leans heavily on the participant's quotes to help interpret the message from the frontlines. Themes that offer both comfort and concern to Southern Baptists leaders are explored.

Chapter 3 followed the outline of the survey given to the missionaries. The survey looked at how the missionaries were doing in their spiritual, physical, financial, and emotional lives. The survey then explored the challenges the missionaries face and their assessment of Southern Baptist missionary care. Chapter 4 focuses on the four areas of the participant's lives beginning with the strongest area of health as assessed by the missionaries.<sup>74</sup> Hence, the spiritual condition of the missionaries will be addressed first, followed by their emotional, physical, and financial condition. A closer look at the challenges the missionaries face will be integrated into these four areas.

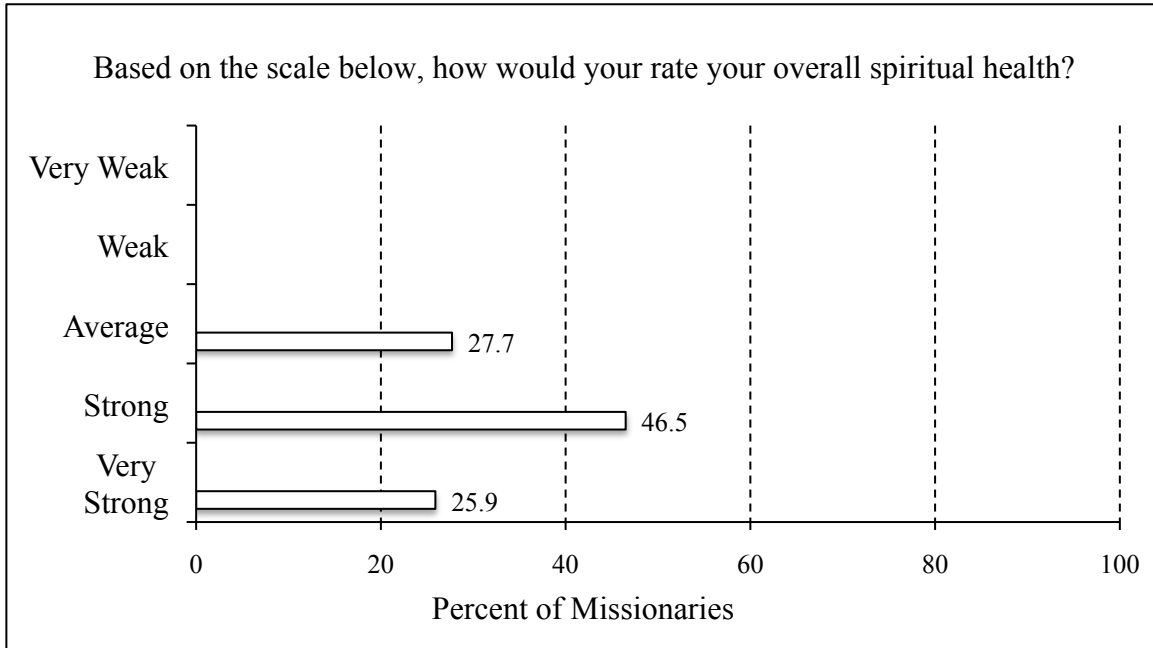
### **Spiritual Condition**

Intercultural missions on the frontlines is spiritually challenging. Spiritual warfare is common as missionaries penetrate the darkness of unreached ethnic groups in North America. Spiritual battles take spiritual strength to survive. Hence, spiritual health is necessary for all missionaries. The participants in this study indicated that they experienced a high level of spiritual health—over 70 percent of the missionaries rated their relationship with Jesus as “strong” or “very strong” while the remaining 27 percent rated their overall relationship with Jesus as average. No missionary rated his or her overall relationship with Jesus as “weak” or “very weak.” Of course, in an ideal world every missionary would have a very strong relationship with Jesus and would excel in all of the spiritual disciplines. Missionaries, however, are human and experience struggles like all believers. Hence, the message from the frontlines regarding the spiritual health of the missionaries, with the exception of a few concerns, is comforting.

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<sup>74</sup>Addressing the strongest area of health and then moving toward the weaker areas of health improves the flow of the chapter and increases the emphasis on the areas of health that need more attention.

Table 13. Overall spiritual health



### Comforting Signs

I believe the reason for the high marks regarding spiritual health relates to the missionaries' keen awareness that they can do nothing apart from God's power. The missionaries know they must depend on God, hence they foster a strong commitment to the disciplines of praying, reading Scripture, pursuing holiness, sharing Jesus, and attending church. Over 90 percent of the missionaries indicated that their consistency in these areas was above average. Multiple quotes from the missionaries support this claim. One missionary responded, "I've learned that I can produce nothing that lasts (for any length of time) without the guidance of the Holy Spirit. I have to be plugged in. Otherwise, there is no life flowing through me."<sup>75</sup> Another missionary wrote, "In the

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<sup>75</sup>Participant 69, survey conducted by author, January 29, 2013.

context I live, I cannot be effective unless I am desperately pursuing Christ to work in me and then through me.”<sup>76</sup> Hence, desperation for God leads to dependence on God. One missionary connected these ideas by writing, “The business of juggling a job and ministry makes it hard to make time to keep up with spiritual disciplines. However, working among Afghans and seeing God change their lives is something that I know that I cannot do on my own. It requires me to increase my faith and reliance on God.”<sup>77</sup> Southern Baptists can be grateful that their intercultural missionaries have a strong commitment to the spiritual disciplines due to their desperation for God to work through them to further His kingdom.

Another reason for strong spiritual health relates to the way God uses the challenges of intercultural ministry to draw the missionaries closer to himself. The data from chapter 3 revealed that being overwhelmed by spiritual needs is the second most difficult challenge that missionaries face. The missionaries encounter vast lostness on a daily basis. The immensity of the task before the missionaries could cripple their faith or challenge their focus. However, God uses these challenges to cultivate the spiritual health of missionaries. Hence, I believe the missionaries’ awareness of God’s tendency to refine his children through the challenges they face helps explain the spiritual health of the missionaries. Several quotes from the missionaries support this claim. For instance, one missionary responded, “Encountering lostness on a daily basis drives me closer to my Lord through prayer, meditation, study, reading, and equipping myself to be His

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<sup>76</sup>Participant 46, survey conducted by author, January 28, 2013.

<sup>77</sup>Participant 13, survey conducted by author, January 28, 2013.

ambassador.”<sup>78</sup> Another missionary wrote, “I love the exposure and experience I have gained working with persecuted people from around the world. It has changed my perspective and given me a passion to make a difference.”<sup>79</sup> A missionary from the southern part of the United States further supports these observations: “Engaging peoples of other faiths has caused me to challenge myself to understand my own [beliefs] better and make sure that I can clearly articulate them and how they impact my life. This has resulted in a deeper affection for God and understanding of God.”<sup>80</sup> Hence, God uses the challenges of working in difficult places and among difficult people to shape the spiritual lives of his children.

Overall, Southern Baptists can take comfort in knowing that God is sustaining the spiritual health of the missionaries. He is rewarding their obedience to make disciples by being with them and providing strength for them. A missionary from the northern region of the U.S. summarizes this point well when he states, “The missionary role God has given me has given me experience in my Christian walk that I would never have had. My walk with the Lord has grown much stronger over the last four years, and I have learned more about faith, trust, obedience, boldness, calling, and suffering than I thought I would learn in this role.”<sup>81</sup> Another missionary affirms the spiritual rewards of serving as a missionary in the following way: “Being missionaries, we have learned to become completely dependent on God in every area of our lives. We have seen Him do miracle

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<sup>78</sup>Participant 73, survey conducted by author, January 28, 2013.

<sup>79</sup>Participant 41, survey conducted by author, January 14, 2013.

<sup>80</sup>Participant 63, survey conducted by author, January 30, 2013.

<sup>81</sup>Participant 55, survey conducted by author, December 11, 2012.

after miracle in our lives and in the lives of those we are ministering to. Our faith has multiplied exponentially!”<sup>82</sup> Overall, the missionaries gave a positive report concerning their spiritual health on the frontlines. However, it would be unwise to assume that all intercultural missionaries are thriving in all areas of their spiritual lives.

### **Signs of Concern**

Frontline warfare is difficult because missionaries are not fighting against flesh and blood but against evil spiritual powers and demonic strongholds (Eph 6:10-12). One of the ways Christians can fight against these forces is through fasting. Jesus modeled the importance of fasting as it relates to defeating Satan and overcoming demonic strongholds (Matt 4:1-11). Fasting, however, was an area of weakness for participants in this study. Approximately 67.5 percent of the missionaries rated their consistency in fasting as “weak” or “very weak.” Several reasons could account for the weak response regarding fasting. Generally speaking, Southern Baptist are not known for their emphasis on fasting. In fact, there has only been one resolution at an annual convention that included the call for fasting in its title in the whole history of the Southern Baptist Convention, and that occurred in 1933.<sup>83</sup> Furthermore, church planting training in North America typically places little emphasis on fasting for the advancement of the God’s kingdom. Since fasting is rarely emphasized and seldom discussed, most Southern Baptist missionaries overlook its importance just as other Southern Baptists do. Nevertheless, the high number of missionaries that struggle with fasting is disconcerting.

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<sup>82</sup>Participant 106, survey conducted by author, January 13, 2013.

<sup>83</sup>*Annual of the 1933 Southern Baptist Convention* (Nashville: Marshall and Bruce Co. 1933), 101.



The scope of the challenges related to reaching unreached ethnic groups across North America makes this an important topic that should never be overlooked.

Another area of concern relates to the missionaries ability to take a day of rest. God commands his people to take a Sabbath rest once a week. Protecting a day of Sabbath rest is a way to worship God and demonstrate one's trust in God. Taking a Sabbath rest is also important for maintaining one's sanity. Nearly 40 percent of the missionaries, however, indicated that they struggled with taking a day of rest. I believe the missionaries struggle to take a day of rest because of the hectic lifestyles they live. They simply get busy and attempt to balance far too many tasks. The stage of life that many missionaries happen to be in also contributes to the inability to protect a day of rest. A significant number of missionaries in this study had to balance school, job, family, and ministry at the same time. I believe finding time to rest simply gets pushed aside in the effort to balance all of the responsibilities of life. Furthermore, the relational dynamics of intercultural work increases the difficulty to protect days of rest. The missionaries' foreign-born friends often have high expectations concerning the amount of time that the missionaries can spend with them. Hence, the relational expectations placed on the missionaries further complicates the challenge of finding time to rest.

Several quotes from the missionaries validate these claims. One missionary explained, "I just find myself spending more time sharing with people but I don't get to put time aside for nourishing myself. I tend to neglect taking time out to refresh myself."<sup>84</sup> Another missionary wrote, "Since becoming a missionary my relationship with Christ has suffered in many ways. I am often more consumed with the busyness of

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<sup>84</sup>Participant 48, survey conducted by author, January 24, 2013.

missions than with my own spiritual health.”<sup>85</sup> The following quote is from a missionary in response to the question of whether one’s missionary role has had a positive or negative affect on one’s spiritual life. The participant’s response is indicative of the challenge associated with missionaries taking a day of rest. She wrote,

At this point I would say “positively,” but I'm recovering from a time of when I would have said “negatively” because my life was very unbalanced. I had way too many commitments between seminary, nursing, teaching, working with college students, and working with internationals. It was too much and my times of rest and refresh[ment] with the Lord were not adequate. The Lord was good to help me regain perspective, but being intentional to take time away to rest and refresh myself continues to be a struggle.<sup>86</sup>

The chaos of intercultural service makes taking a day of rest hard. Yet, taking a day of Sabbath rest is vital for spiritual health and must be protected.

### **Emotional Condition**

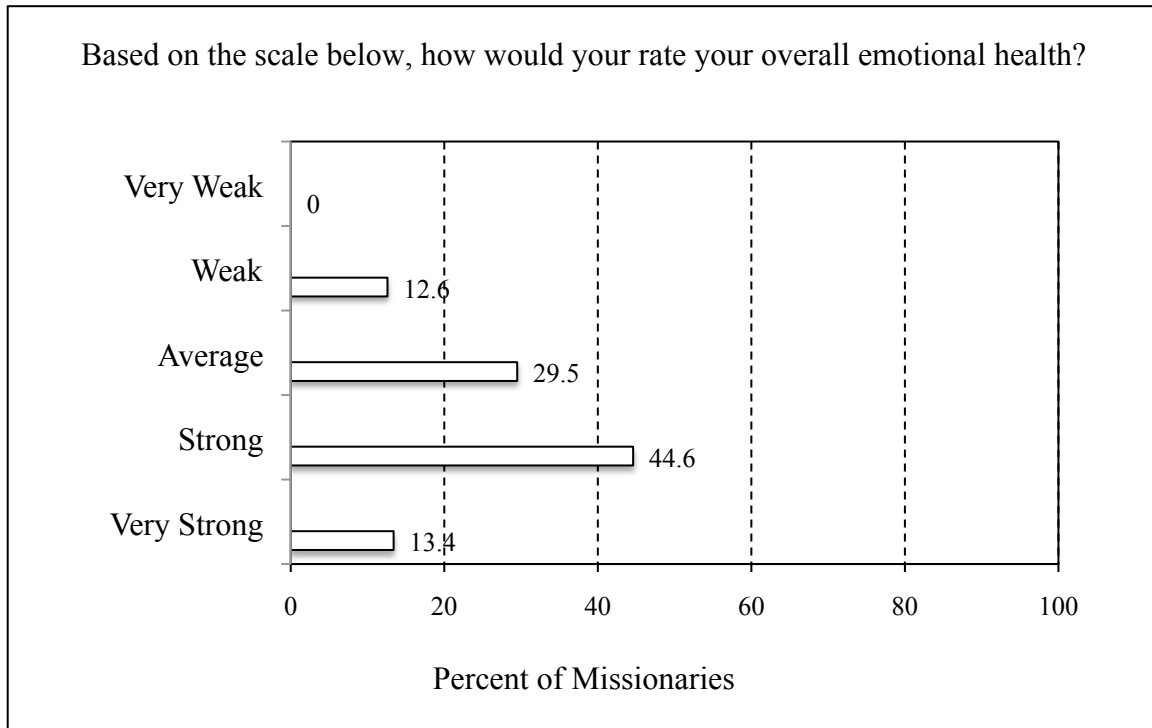
Intercultural missions on the frontlines is often emotionally challenging. Intercultural missionaries face pressure from all directions. The spiritual and physical needs of the people they serve are often overwhelming. The expectations of denominational entities are high. Missionaries often live far from home, separated from the natural support systems of their families and sending church. Spiritual attacks, financial struggles, and slow progress in reaching the lost challenge their emotional health. Fortunately, 58 percent of the missionaries indicate they enjoy strong or very strong emotional health. However, 42 percent of the missionaries only experience weak

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<sup>85</sup>Participant 70, survey conducted by author, January 7, 2013.

<sup>86</sup>Participant 7, survey conducted by author, January 22, 2013.

Table 14. Overall emotional health



or average levels of emotional health. Exploring the comforting and concerning issues related to the emotional health of the missionaries will help one understand the data provided by the missionaries.

### **Comforting Signs**

Two major reasons help explain the emotional health of the missionaries. The first reason relates to the satisfaction that missionaries experience while serving God. The missionaries consistently rated the presence of positive emotions such as joy and peace higher than the negative emotions such as fear and loneliness. I believe the reason for the stronger presence of positive emotions relates to the satisfaction that missionaries experience while serving God. Their circumstances may be challenging, yet they know they are in the middle of God's will and that brings them incredible joy. Multiple

missionaries echoed this theme as they articulated how grateful they were that God had chosen them to serve. A missionary from the West wrote, “It brings me so much joy, peace, excitement to be actively proclaiming his truths to those who have never heard. It is what energizes me and keeps me going. I am so thankful God chooses to use me to expand his kingdom.”<sup>87</sup> Another missionary wrote, “Cross-cultural church planting is the most stressful ministry I have ever attempted, but it is also the greatest, most life-fulfilling action I have ever done in my life.”<sup>88</sup> Finally, a missionary from the South stated, “I can see God working in my life and [in] the lives of others. I have more hope and love than I have ever had before. Serving this way makes me happy and gives me purpose.”<sup>89</sup> The joy and satisfaction that missionaries find in serving God helps to explain why the missionaries indicated that they experienced more joy and peace than stress and conflict in their ministries.

The second reason for the emotional health of the missionaries relates to their awareness of the role of suffering in their lives. The missionaries know that God uses suffering to strengthen his children. Hence, the missionaries can maintain joy through pain and difficult circumstances. Multiple missionaries acknowledged their emotional health was strengthened by this realization that God refined their faith through suffering. A missionary from the South illustrated this point by writing, “We have suffered much, but our faith has grown. Therefore, we are emotionally well, in spite of hard things.”<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>87</sup>Participant 73, survey conducted by author, January 28, 2013.

<sup>88</sup>Participant 83, survey conducted by author, January 14, 2013.

<sup>89</sup>Participant 34. Survey conducted by author, October 25, 2012.

<sup>90</sup>Participant 56, survey conducted by author, October 26, 2012.

Another missionary wrote, “I think that ministry is a huge stress on every missionary’s emotional health. It drives me to depend upon God more, and every day God helps me to deal with this stress. That is the only reason that it is manageable and, overall, not causing me harm.”<sup>91</sup> Finally, a missionary from the South explained, “Ministry is tough, really tough, and there are many days I feel stressed and burned out. However, the joy and peace that comes from pouring into lost people, and people of other cultures, is worth it. The Father has always provided amazing emotional highs even amidst hard days.”<sup>92</sup> I believe the missionaries were able to articulate such a wise understanding of suffering due to their strong spiritual life and their firm understanding of God. They allowed suffering to grow their faith and that strengthened their emotional health. The wisdom and maturity of the missionaries to realize that God uses challenging circumstances to cultivate their faith is most encouraging.

### **Signs for Concern**

The missionaries may realize God’s goodness in the midst of their struggles, but their emotional health is still compromised by the inherent difficulties related to missionary service. Burnout is always a risk even for the missionaries that are doing well. Nearly 30 percent of missionaries experience an average level of emotional health and 12 percent indicated that their emotional health was weak. Hence, it would be unwise to overlook how tough the struggle is to maintain emotional health on the frontlines. I believe the primary reasons that lead to lower levels of emotional health relate to the

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<sup>91</sup>Participant 78, survey conducted by author, December 20, 2012.

<sup>92</sup>Participant 3, survey conducted by author, November 27, 2012.

location where missionaries serve, the spiritual resistance of the people they serve among, and the frustration of being misunderstood by local churches and sending agencies. These three reasons that influence lower levels of emotional health deserve further attention.

Many factors contribute to the harsh environments that many missionaries endure. Several of these factors have already been referenced such as the cost of living in large urban cities far from home. Being far from home can lead to loneliness and feelings of isolation. A missionary from Canada explained, “We moved away from all of our family and friends. We spent the first 29 years of our lives in one area and now have spent the last 2 1/2 in a totally new area away from our entire support network. ‘Isolation’ would be a key word here with very little support.”<sup>93</sup> Other missionaries expressed the difficulties of living as a minority among various ethnic groups. For instance, a missionary from the North that ministers among African Muslims wrote, “Being a white resident in the Mecca for African-Americans, I and my children are harassed and berated almost daily. I’m used to it after 7 years, but I’m sure it has played a significant role in my emotional life.”<sup>94</sup> Hence, serving in harsh environments can take a toll on one’s emotional health.

The harsh environments are also compounded when one works among spiritually resistant people. A significant number of missionaries in this study work among some of the least reached groups in North America. Several missionaries acknowledged the difficulty of laboring for years without seeing much visible fruit. The hard work combined with slow progress fuels the emotional challenges of filling

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<sup>93</sup>Participant 65, survey conducted by author, January 30, 2013.

<sup>94</sup>Participant 87, survey conducted by author, December 3, 2012.

frustrated, tired, and burnt out. A missionary from the Midwest supports this claim by writing, “I honestly have to say that ministry often takes a toll on me mentally. It is hard to consistently work with a people group that is so hardened by their culture and religion. It is difficult to go 100 percent day in and day out and not ever see any real fruit. I know I am faithful when I am obedient, but I often just feel so bogged down.”<sup>95</sup> Quotes like this one illustrate how one’s emotional health can be challenged by serving among spiritually-resistant people.

The third reason for lower levels of emotional health relates being misunderstood by local churches and sending agencies. Unfortunately, denominational entities have unintentionally damaged the emotional health of our missionaries. The damage has occurred through unrealistic expectations placed on missionaries, lack of communication, and scarce levels of encouragement. I believe this is one of the most difficult emotional challenges that missionaries face. Missionaries can anticipate the hardships related to harsh environments and spiritually resistant people. However, it is far more difficult for missionaries to overcome the frustrations caused by those that should be their biggest supporters. The following quotes support these claims. One missionary lamented, “We don’t fit into the structure of SBC entities [and] so it doesn’t really seem that institutions are ‘for us,’ which leads to consistent conflict and uncertainty.”<sup>96</sup> Another missionary explained how a lack of communication from her sending agency negatively affected her emotional health. She wrote,

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<sup>95</sup>Participant 84, survey conducted by author, January 23, 2013.

<sup>96</sup>Participant 33, survey conducted by author, October 30, 2012.

Honestly, I suffered for a while I tried to live up to unreasonable expectations with no feedback from our agency. In just the past couple of years, I've come to find much more peace and satisfaction in relying upon Jesus completely for worth and belonging and pretty much forgetting our agency exists.<sup>97</sup> There's much more freedom in this view, which has taken quite a while to come to.<sup>98</sup>

Another missionary wrote, "I have become discouraged with the lack of opportunity to share my heart and feelings. I know God sees and hears and is in control but I feel pretty much invisible from the Body of Christ and NAMB."<sup>99</sup> Missionary frustration is not only targeted at large entities like NAMB. It often exists at the local level as well. The following quotes illustrates this point when the missionary writes,

Due to the nature of what I do in working cross-culturally with Polish Catholics and Polish Jews primarily, I do not have many friends locally. The church I attend does not value missions and does not wish to understand what I do cross-culturally in missions. I feel isolated but not released from attending this church. I have acted to influence the church as much as possible in cross-cultural missions and have seen some positive outcomes; nevertheless, I cannot say that I have any friends in this church.<sup>100</sup>

Missionaries that suffer the emotional challenges associated with neglect from local churches and sending agencies travel a hard road. They have to lean on God even more when the people that should be supporting them fail to do so. Their experiences, however, show the importance of calling Southern Baptists to a higher standard when it comes to domestic missionary care.

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<sup>97</sup>The agency referred to here is the North American Mission Board (NAMB).

<sup>98</sup>Participant 80, survey conducted by author, October 20, 2012.

<sup>99</sup>Participant 41, survey conducted by author, January 14, 2013.

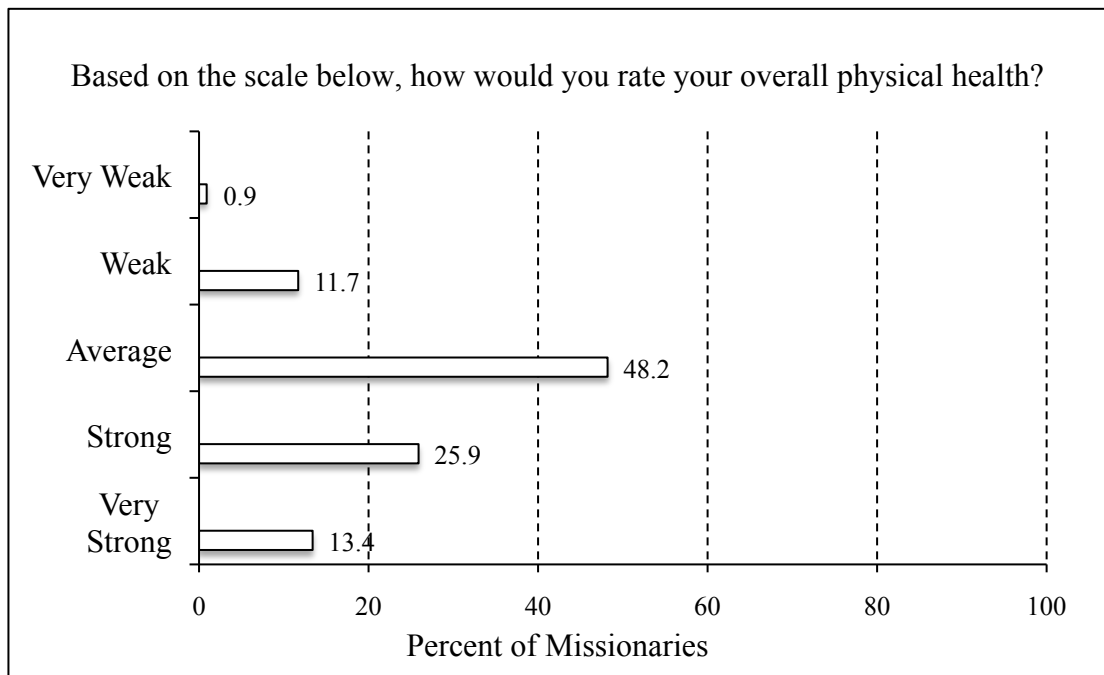
<sup>100</sup>Participant 103, survey conducted by author, January 7, 2013.



## Physical Condition

Intercultural missions is often physically challenging. The word “average” best characterizes the participants’ attitudes toward their physical health. Approximately 48 percent of the missionaries rated their overall physical health as “average” while only 39 percent of the missionaries indicated that they enjoyed “strong” or “very strong” physical health. Nearly 13 percent of the missionaries indicated that they were in “weak”

Table 15. Overall physical health



physical health. Once more, that means at least 1 in 8 missionaries suffers from poor health based on their own assessment. The missionaries revealed that some aspects of missionary service enhanced their pursuit of physical health while other aspects hindered their pursuit. In light of this fact, exploring several comforting and concerning insights

related to the physical health of intercultural missionaries helps interpret the data from the missionaries.

### **Comforting Signs**

Several positive aspects of missionary service enhance the pursuit of physical health. I believe the leading reasons why almost half of the missionaries enjoy good health revolve around urban dwelling, exposure to the healthy habits of some foreign-born immigrants, and the positive pressure to set a good example of health. A significant portion of missionaries live in large urban areas and depend on public transportation. Urban dwelling requires much exercise, especially if children are involved. A missionary from the northern United States explained, “My exercise is chasing three children, living in a city where we do not own a car and walk miles every day, and climbing 6 flights of stairs several times a day with children and groceries in hand!”<sup>101</sup> Missionaries that use sports or dancing as a platform to build relationships have an advantage when it comes to getting adequate exercise. One missionary wrote, “I have spent many hours dancing with Somalis in warm closed window buildings, so this has increased my endurance.”<sup>102</sup> Further, some missionaries have the opportunity to work among ethnic groups that have better eating habits than most North Americans. In this light, one missionary remarked, “I have had many opportunities to learn from the often-times more healthy lifestyles of my friends from different cultures. Their foods are generally more healthy and have been added to my diet from time to time.”<sup>103</sup> Perhaps the most encouraging reason for good

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<sup>101</sup>Participant 87, survey conducted by author, December 3, 2012.

<sup>102</sup>Participant 99, survey conducted by author, October 25, 2012.

health among the missionaries revolves around the pressure they feel to be a good example for others to follow. One missionary wrote, “I have had to face the reality that I have to take care of my physical health in order to be effective in my service to others. Also, if I have to confront others about right living, I must be sure that my words and actions are harmonized.”<sup>104</sup> Other missionaries voiced similar thoughts and reinforced the importance of physical health as it relates to missionary service. Their insights help explain why many missionaries enjoy good health.

### **Signs of Concern**

Several aspects of missionary service hinder the pursuit of physical health. I believe the primary reasons for poor decisions regarding personal health revolve around busyness, stress, financial limitations, and cultural expectations placed on the missionaries. Multiple missionaries argued that their hectic schedules and high stress levels made healthy living difficult. One missionary lamented, “It is difficult to find time to exercise and to eat healthy. I am constantly on the go.”<sup>105</sup> Another missionary explained how stress and low income affected his health options: “Because of living on [a] low income and without a car for 3 years we walk more and eat less. Due to [our] low income and being a full-time working mom I have much higher stress levels and do not get healthy foods as they are expensive.”<sup>106</sup> These quotes reveal the intimate connection between emotional health, financial health, and physical health.

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<sup>103</sup>Participant 63, survey conducted by author, January 30, 2013.

<sup>104</sup>Participant 49, survey conducted by author, January 28, 2013.

<sup>105</sup>Participant 83, survey conducted by author, January 14, 2013.

<sup>106</sup>Participant 6, survey conducted by author, January 15, 2013.

Several missionaries also revealed how cultural expectations affected their physical health decisions. In cross-cultural ministry, the expectation to eat whatever is placed before you can be a real challenge. One missionary wrote, “Since I have started working with internationals in the States, I have gained weight and started having to take medicine for high blood pressure. It is hard to eat healthy when I am eating so many greasy foods at my international friends' homes.”<sup>107</sup> Another missionary quipped, “I want to spend time with my international friends so I lose sleep. They like to feed me so I gain weight.”<sup>108</sup> Perhaps the best quote, which captures the dilemma of busyness and cultural expectations, comes from a missionary from the Midwest. She wrote, “Constant busyness and the need to accept hospitality offered to me has affected my health in a negative way. I think all of us on my team have gained weight since beginning [our missionary] service.”<sup>109</sup> Indeed, several aspects of missionary service hinder the pursuit of physical health.

Overall, Southern Baptists need to know that their missionaries only experience an average level of health. Southern Baptists, however, should strive for the day when their missionaries enjoy strong levels of health. The need to encourage missionary health is evident. If one looks at the percentage of missionaries that assessed their level of health as “weak” or “average” in the four categories included in the survey, then the following statements are true—over 80 percent of missionaries need more rest,

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<sup>107</sup>Participant 75, survey conducted by author, September 27, 2012.

<sup>108</sup>Participant 7, survey conducted by author, January 22, 2013.

<sup>109</sup>Participant 70, survey conducted by author, January 7, 2013.

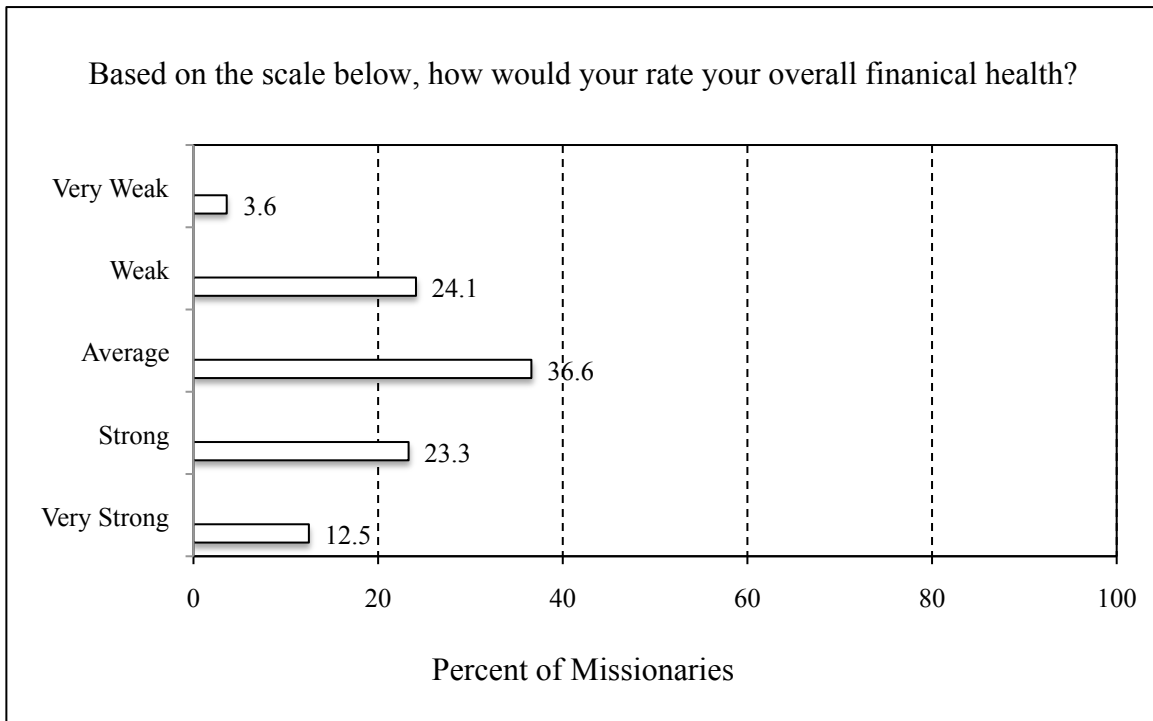
73 percent need more exercise, 65 percent need higher energy levels, and 58 percent need healthier diets.

### **Financial Condition**

Intercultural missions on the frontlines is financially challenging. Exploring the financial conditions of missionaries requires one to confront the complexities surrounding money and missions. Southern Baptists cannot afford to fully fund every missionary it would take to engage every pocket of unreached ethnic groups in North America. Leaders, therefore, face the challenge of determining who should be funded, how much they should be given, and how long the funding should last. Missionaries then face the decision whether to raise support or serve bi-vocationally. The issue of money in missions is further complicated by the cost of relocating to expensive urban areas. Foreign missionaries, moreover, serving in North America on student visas or religious worker visas face even more challenges. They often have job restrictions and financial challenges unique to their roles.

It would be unwise to assume that every missionary struggles financially. Some missionaries are fully funded or have raised full support. A significant number, however, do struggle financially. Nearly a third (28 percent) of the missionaries surveyed assessed their overall financial condition as “weak” or “very weak.” Approximately 36.6 percent of the missionaries assessed their overall financial health as “average” while 35.8 of the missionaries assessed their financial health as “strong” or

Table 16. Overall financial health



“very strong.” The written responses of the missionaries revealed the themes of struggle, sacrifice, and dependence on God. Exploring the comforting and concerning signs related to the financial health of the missionaries will help interpret the data provided by the missionaries.

### **Comforting Signs**

Two major reasons explain why over 70 percent of the missionaries experience average or strong financial health. The first reason relates to the missionaries’ ability to find creative ways to support their ministries. Nearly 50 percent of the missionaries served bi-vocationally. Moreover, many missionaries worked strategic jobs that brought them into close proximity with their target people group. For instance, some missionaries worked as ESL instructors or in local coffee shops in diverse neighborhoods. Many

missionaries were able to raise some support from friends, family, local churches and Baptist entities. The missionaries demonstrated the ability to work hard and find ways to support their ministries. The creativity and work ethic of the missionaries helps explain why most missionaries are able to financially survive in North America.

The second reason for the financial health of missionaries relates to their awareness of how God uses financial struggles to refine their faith. In Scripture, Jesus calls his disciples to a life of struggle and financial sacrifice.<sup>110</sup> Yet, he commands them to never worry about the future because God will take care of their needs.<sup>111</sup> Southern Baptist intercultural missionaries can relate to the challenges faced by the disciples. A missionary from the West explained, “I earn a low hourly wage from the warehouse and housing allowance from the church. Our ends barely meet with no room at all for any savings. With that said, God is totally faithful. He lavishly meets all of our needs, often in very unpredictable, remarkably blessed ways.”<sup>112</sup> Another missionary wrote, “Although we are not really able to save any money, God is providing for our needs and taking care of us. It has been exciting to see the miracles he has performed in this regard.”<sup>113</sup> Finally, a missionary from the Midwest told this story:

There have been many times that I have had to pay out of pocket for ministry materials such as Somali Bibles. Also, I do not get paid for the ministry that I do with Somalis so in a way I am losing money by sacrificing time that I could be

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<sup>110</sup>In Luke 10:1-7, Jesus sends out 72 messengers, and he tells them that they will go out as sheep among wolves. Further, Jesus instructs them to leave behind money and extra supplies. The disciples were expected to trust God with their safety and financial security.

<sup>111</sup>In Matthew 6:25-34, Jesus commands his followers to never worry about food, drink, or clothes. He calls his disciples to trust in God who will provide for them just as he provides for the birds in the sky and the flowers in the field.

<sup>112</sup>Participant 104, survey conducted by author, January 18, 2013.

<sup>113</sup>Participant 106, survey conducted by author, January 13, 2013.

working. It is a joyful thing to rely on the Lord to provide for my wife and me, and I wouldn't want it any other way.<sup>114</sup>

Southern Baptists can be encouraged that the missionaries realize God uses financial struggles to stretch and strengthen their faith.

### **Signs of Concern**

God's goodness may be evident in the financial challenges missionaries face; nevertheless, it is still wise to take a closer look at the depth of financial struggle that some missionaries endure. One must remember that the majority of missionaries included in this study are well educated, have children, and live in expensive urban areas. Multiple missionaries live off of several different income streams, which often require balancing more responsibilities with less pay. In addition, missionaries often have to spend their own money on ministry expenses and benevolence needs. These factors compound the intensity of financial hardships. Several quotes from the missionaries illustrate this reality. A missionary that works with South Asians wrote,

Socializing with the lost [and] eating at Indian Restaurants can be expensive. We are fully funded in the eyes of the Association, but we still live below the poverty line and have no health insurance. I just had a baby and my husband is not allowed to work outside of church planting. We are thankful for all that we have been given and are surviving.<sup>115</sup>

Another missionary wrote, “[Our] net worth decreased by over \$50,000 our first two years here in trying to survive financially. Only in recent months (after year two) are we

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<sup>114</sup>Participant 84, survey conducted by author, January 23, 2013.

<sup>115</sup>Participant 52, survey conducted by author, November 27, 2012.



getting within a few hundred dollars of our tightest possible monthly budget.”<sup>116</sup> Finally, a missionary from the North lamented,

I have struggled financially over the last few years. I have been able to pay most of my usual monthly expenses, but when an unexpected car repair or something else comes up I have not had any emergency money. Also, I end up spending a lot of money on helping the refugee families that I work with and over time that has really added up.<sup>117</sup>

The missionaries’ willing embrace of a life of financial struggle reflects their commitment and calling to serve God. However, the level of financial struggle that most missionaries endure requires one to evaluate the systems and structures of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Several characteristics of Southern Baptist life help explain the financial struggle of intercultural missionaries, including the lack of awareness concerning the need for intercultural missionaries in North America, the funding structures of the SBC, and the misconception that all missionaries are fully funded. Unfortunately, many Southern Baptists fail to realize the need for more intercultural missionaries in North America. The lack of awareness leads to low levels of support for intercultural missionaries. A missionary from the South explained,

The greatest obstacle that I face is that many churches do not value cross-cultural missions and church planting and, for this reason, they tend to view them as an extraneous undertakings relegated to national and state denominational agencies. Consequently, many churches do not understand the nature of cross-cultural work and are unwilling to support it financially.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>116</sup>Participant 38, survey conducted by author, January 14, 2013.

<sup>117</sup>Participant 75, survey conducted by author, September 27, 2012.

<sup>118</sup>Participant 103, survey conducted by author, January 7, 2013.

Intercultural missionaries that raise their own support endure a very difficult battle when churches fail to realize the need for intercultural missions on North American soil.

Hence, the lack of awareness and support by local churches is one of the leading causes of frustration and financial struggle in the lives of the missionaries.

The second characteristic of Southern Baptist life that explains the financial struggle of intercultural missionaries relates to the funding structures of the SBC. Support that does come in from local churches and Baptist entities like state conventions and NAMB is often temporary. Baptist entities are accustomed to supporting a church planter for a limited number of years, that is, until their church plant can assume their salary. I believe the plant-and-pastor model is virtually irrelevant for catalytic intercultural missionaries focused on raising up indigenous leaders. Yet, that is the funding structure that many intercultural missionaries fall under. Hence, while the temporary support from Baptist entities is appreciated, it leads to further stress. Several quotes from the missionaries help validate these claims. One missionary stated, “As a NAMB church planter there is a clock that begins counting down as you land as a church planter. I know that I have a set amount of time. . . . This causes some anxiety as a husband and father, because you want to make sure your family is properly cared for now and in the future.”<sup>119</sup> Another missionary offered the following concern:

We live in a very costly city, and are viewed as self-employed, meaning we must pay all of our Social Security, [we] have no leverage with insurance, and no “benefits” package. So, we are usually living month-to-month and not able yet to purchase a home, etc. Also, our income is okay right now because of our partial support from NAMB. But that money will go away soon and is always seen as unpredictable.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>119</sup>Participant 83, survey conducted by author, January 14, 2013.

<sup>120</sup>Participant 20, survey conducted by author, December 3, 2012.

The third characteristic revolves around a major misconception that exists among Southern Baptists in North America concerning the funding of missionaries. Many Southern Baptists assume that all missionaries are fully supported through the Cooperative Program. This misconception exists because of the misunderstanding of the way missionaries are funded by the IMB and NAMB. The IMB fully funds the missionaries that it commissions. NAMB does not. Churches that fail to realize this major difference between the two primary mission agencies of the SBC will fail to see the importance of supporting domestic missionaries. A missionary from the Midwest supports this observation by writing, “In my opinion, the average Baptist church member does not know there are Baptist missionaries who raise their own support. Being with NAMB and serving at a local church, almost everyone (99 percent) believes that I am funded by one or both organizations. This is a major struggle.”<sup>121</sup> Southern Baptist churches, then, must be educated about the financial needs of their intercultural missionaries.

### **Conclusion**

Interpreting the data from the frontline missionaries is challenging. No one sentence completely summarizes the condition of the Southern Baptist intercultural missionaries serving in North America. Each missionary faces a unique blend of spiritual, emotional, physical, and financial challenges. Each missionary experiences different levels of success and failure related to these challenges. What is more, each missionary has different support mechanisms in place to help them maintain their health and sanity.

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<sup>121</sup>Participant 74, survey conducted by author, December 11, 2012.

However, the evidence from chapters 3 and 4 indicates that all of the missionaries would benefit from improved levels of missionary care. The responses of the missionaries regarding their conditions and challenges prove this point beyond any reasonable doubt. The purpose of the following chapter is to propose several steps to improve missionary care for domestic intercultural missionaries so that they can thrive in their vital role of reaching the nations for Christ in North America.

## CHAPTER 5

### IMPROVING MISSIONARY CARE

Military leaders must know what is happening in the trenches. How are the soldiers doing? Do they have adequate supplies? Are they wounded? What will it take for them to succeed? Obtaining information from the frontlines was so important that men like my grandfather risked their lives to make communication possible in combat zones. Their sacrifice, however, would have been useless if the military leaders coordinating the battle ignored the messages from the frontlines. The one component that validated my grandfather's sacrifice was the impact that his message had on the military decisions that determined the outcome of the war. Simply knowing how the soldiers were doing and the challenges they were facing was pointless without an informed plan to better care for their needs. Hence, military leaders had to take steps to help the soldiers on the frontlines overcome the challenges they were facing.

A similar responsibility rests on Southern Baptist leaders to respond to the needs of intercultural missionaries serving in North America. The data presented in the two previous chapters indicates that intercultural missionaries have legitimate needs and concerns that need to be addressed. The participants' assessments of their spiritual, physical, financial, and emotional conditions revealed that there is ample room for improvement in each category. The participants' assessments of their challenges revealed the fierce nature of the battles they face. Further, the participants' assessments of the level of care they received indicates a need for better holistic missionary care. The

majority of missionaries rated their overall current level of care as “average” or “below average.” The missionaries deserve better than average care. Further, many missionaries were frustrated with the systems of support that currently exist, which fail to meet their needs. Inadequate systems of support and average levels of care for our frontline missionaries are simply unacceptable. Hence, Southern Baptist leaders must take steps toward improving the level of care for intercultural missionaries.

Fortunately, helpful resources exist to aid Southern Baptists in their pursuit to improve the level of care for domestic missionaries. Multiple books are available on the topic of missionary care. The books I recommend include the titles *Too Valuable to Lose*,<sup>122</sup> *Worth Keeping*,<sup>123</sup> *Tender Care*,<sup>124</sup> *Doing Member Care Well*,<sup>125</sup> *Missionary Care*,<sup>126</sup> *Tender Loving Care of Missionaries and Their Families*,<sup>127</sup> and *Serving as Senders*.<sup>128</sup> I recommend these books because they address challenges missionaries face that often lead to negative attrition. The books often assume a Western missionary is

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<sup>122</sup>William D. Taylor, *Too Valuable to Lose: Exploring the Causes and Cures of Missionary Attrition* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1997).

<sup>123</sup>Rob Hay et al., *Worth Keeping: Global Perspectives on Best Practice in Missionary Retention* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library and World Evangelical Alliance, 2007).

<sup>124</sup>Reagon Wilson and David Kronback, *Tender Care: Providing Pastoral Care for God's Global Servants* (Rockford, IL: Barnabas International, 2013).

<sup>125</sup>Kelly O'Donnell, ed., *Doing Member Care Well: Perspectives and Practices from Around the World* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2002).

<sup>126</sup>Kelly O'Donnell, ed., *Missionary Care: Counting the Cost for World Evangelization* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1991).

<sup>127</sup>Audrey Cowley, *Tender Loving Care for Missionaries and Their Families* (Birmingham, AL: Woman's Missionary Union, 1987).

<sup>128</sup>Neal Pirolo, *Serving As Senders: How to Care for Your Missionaries While They Are Preparing to Go, While They Are on the Field, When They Return Home* (San Diego: Emmaus Road, 1991).

serving in an international context. However, the basic principles of missionary care they present apply to domestic missionaries serving in intercultural contexts in North America. The basic principles include the importance of affirmation, communication, and demonstration of love in practical ways.

The books on missionary care are further complimented by on-line resources devoted to improving missionary care. Organizations such as Member Care Associates and Barnabas International make a wide array of articles on missionary care available on their websites [www.membercare.org](http://www.membercare.org) and [www.barnabas.org](http://www.barnabas.org). Perhaps the most thorough website devoted to missionary care is [www.missionarycare.com](http://www.missionarycare.com). The website is part of the personal ministry of Ron Koteskey, who serves as a Member Care Consultant for Go InterNational. His website contains a database of over eight hundred articles on the topic of missionary care.<sup>129</sup> He also offers fifteen free e-books related to missionary care through his website. The plethora of articles and books on missionary care ensure that Southern Baptists have ample resources at their disposal to inform practical steps for improving missionary care.

The purpose of this chapter is to propose several steps Southern Baptists can take to improve intercultural missionary care in North America. The steps proposed are in response to the insights gleaned from the missionaries that participated in this study. Furthermore, they take into consideration the principles gleaned from resources focused on international missionary care and are designed to be applicable at all levels of Southern Baptist life. For instance, they are designed to be simple enough for a

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<sup>129</sup>See <http://www.missionarycare.com/database.htm>.

local church to implement, yet holistic enough for an entity like North American Mission Board to implement at a larger level. The steps revolve around three layers of support that every intercultural missionary needs. The three layers of support include a champion, a care provider, and a circle of support. A brief overview of these three layers of support will be offered in order to address the critical question of how Southern Baptists can improve the level of care for their domestic missionaries.

### **Missionary Care Champion**

Every intercultural missionary needs a missionary care champion. A missionary care champion is someone who understands the importance of missionary care and devotes time and energy toward ensuring that frontline missionaries have access to quality care. Champions would be the first person a missionary would contact to begin the process of establishing a strong base of missionary care. The primary role of a champion would be to connect the missionary to a qualified care provider. The ideal champion would have multiple years of personal experience in intercultural ministry. They would thus be familiar with the challenges that missionaries face based on their personal experience.

The concept of a missionary care champion is supported by an article written by Bruce Swanson, titled “A Mindset and Department for Member Care.” He offers helpful advice for organizations that desire to initiate member care strategies and provides a list of what it takes to succeed in setting up a member care strategy. The first item on his list is to select the right member care advocate or facilitator. He argues the advocate must exhibit a “conscious dependence on God and a commitment to personal



spiritual health.”<sup>130</sup> The missionary care champion would function as an advocate for member care for domestic missionaries. His or her selection would be a vital part of the process of initiating a missionary care strategy in North America.

Furthermore, missionary care champions would fulfill several vital functions related to missionary care. First, the champions should be knowledgeable of existing missionary care resources such as the books and articles listed above. They should also be familiar with local resources that could be leveraged for missionary care such as local retreat centers or Christian counseling centers. Furthermore, the champions should be familiar with the missionary care resources offered by the International Mission Board. The IMB employs people whose sole job is to provide missionary care for missionaries. These IMB staff members could provide valuable insights and other resources that champions could make available to care providers and missionaries. In short, the champions would function as invaluable resources to the missionaries by simply being knowledgeable of missionary care resources.

Second, the champions would be responsible for ensuring that care providers are identified and sufficiently trained. The champion should be knowledgeable of places where care providers may be found. For instance, some churches have counseling ministries with professional and lay counselors. Champions could recruit and train these counselors to understand the unique challenges that missionaries face. Champions, moreover, should be knowledgeable of former international missionaries that may be willing to serve as care providers. The IMB recently initiated a program called Ready

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<sup>130</sup>Bruce Swanson, “A Mindset and Department for Member Care,” in *Doing Member Care Well: Perspectives and Practices from Around the World*, ed. Kelly O’Donnell (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2002), 441.

Reserves. The purpose of the Ready Reserves is to mobilize retired and returned missionaries to fulfill strategic roles globally and locally in North America.<sup>131</sup>

Missionary care champions could communicate with these former missionaries and identify people who would be willing to serve as care providers.

Third, the champions would ensure that a simple process existed for missionaries to connect with care providers. Connecting missionaries and care providers requires a communication strategy that would involve several steps. First, the champion would need to be easily identifiable and easy to contact. Second, the champion would need to follow-up with missionaries that request care in a timely fashion. Third, the champion would need to maintain contact with care providers that are willing to journey alongside missionaries. Lastly, the champion would need to follow-up with the missionary and care provider to ensure that quality care is still taking place. Hence, the champion would be responsible for communication, networking, and evaluation between care providers and missionaries to ensure that the missionaries that desire care are receiving the care they need.

Fourth, the champions would serve as advocates for their missionaries. They would advocate change regarding some of the systemic problems identified by the missionaries. For instance, champions could call Southern Baptist leaders to evaluate the current funding structures available to missionaries. They could call attention to the fact that the Cooperative Program funds and temporary funding from NAMB often fails to meet the financial needs of intercultural missionaries. They could remind church leaders

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<sup>131</sup>Ron Graham, "IMB Initiatives Open New Doors for Missions Involvement," *IMB Connecting*, <http://www.imb.org/main/news/details.asp?LanguageID=1709&StoryID=11137> (accessed April 14, 2013).

that North American missionaries often raise their own support and need the financial support of local churches. Champions could further advocate for reasonable expectations for intercultural missionaries who serve in hard places among hard people. In addition, champions could advocate for better communication between missionaries and Baptist entities, which would help alleviate the lack of awareness concerning their needs. Finally, the champions could lobby for the use of more intercultural missionaries to engage the nations in North America. All of these examples illustrate how missionary care champions could give missionaries a voice. By serving as advocates, the champions would ensure that missionaries never feel invisible or forgotten.

### **Care Provider**

Every intercultural missionary needs a care provider. The care provider is similar to the care champion in that he must also understand the importance of missionary care and be knowledgeable of missionary care resources. The care provider is different from the champion in that he must maintain regular contact with the missionary for the purpose of providing holistic care. The ideal care provider should have personal missions experience. Further, they must understand the unique challenges that intercultural missionaries face in North America.

The concept of a care provider is supported by an article written by Belinda Ng titled, “Some Reflections on Pastoral Care.” Ng addresses the role of a care provider by addressing the need to apply pastoral care principles to missionaries. She writes,

Pastoral care is often associated with the local church in the context of caring for the flock. However, this care must extend beyond ordinary members to include missionaries, whether they are on the field or on home soil for one reason or another . . . Indeed pastoral care is critically important and is a lifeline for missionaries if the church seriously desires to have an effective, on-going work in

Christ's Great Commission. While missionary pastoral care may mean different things to different people, it generally encompasses the following elements: understanding the special needs of missionaries, guidance, counseling, sharing, communicating, friendship, fellowship, visitation, crisis care, prayers, encouragement, and affirmation.<sup>132</sup>

Ng's insights capture the essence of the role of a care provider. The care provider should provide the type of care a pastor would provide for their flock.<sup>133</sup> Other helpful resources that support the concept and explain the role of a care provider include David Pollock's article, "Developing a Flow of Care and Caregivers"<sup>134</sup> and Barry Austin's article "Supporting Missions Through Pastoral Care".<sup>135</sup> Both Pollock and Austin's articles explain how fellow believers can provide much needed pastoral care for missionaries.

Furthermore, missionary care providers would fulfill several vital functions related to missionary care. First, the care provider would have monthly face-to-face meetings with the missionaries. The monthly meetings would need to be holistic in nature. Care providers could accomplish this goal by asking questions related to the missionaries' spiritual, physical, financial, and emotional lives. Care providers would need to build high levels of trust so that open and honest conversations would occur. These face-to-face meetings would need to involve discussions on both the success and challenges the missionary is facing. The care provider, moreover, would need to be intentional in having these balanced conversations. It is far too easy to focus only on the

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<sup>132</sup>Belinda Ng, "Some Reflections on Pastoral Care: Perspectives of the New Sending Countries," in *Too Valuable to Lose: Exploring the Causes and Cures of Missionary Attrition*, ed. William Taylor (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1997), 277.

<sup>134</sup>David Pollock, "Developing a Flow of Care and Caregivers," in *Doing Member Care Well: Perspectives and Practices from Around the World*, ed. Kelly O'Donnell (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2002), 23.

<sup>135</sup>Barry Austin, "Supporting Missions through Pastoral Care," in *Missionary Care: Counting the Cost of World Evangelization*, ed. Kelly O'Donnell (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1992), 60.

positive aspects of missionary service. Hence, care providers would need to create safe environments where both good and bad aspects could be discussed openly. The face-to-face meetings would create a consistent platform for care providers to listen and understand the heart of the missionary, and they would create a consistent platform to enjoy times of prayer and Scripture reading with the missionary.

Second, the care provider would find creative ways to bless the missionaries under their care. In Scripture, believers are challenged to love each other and to bear each other's burdens (e.g., 1 John 2:7-8; Gal 6:2-3). The relationship between the care provider and missionary must reflect these priorities. It is imperative, therefore, for the care provider to lead the way in responding to the practical needs of missionaries. Some missionaries may need volunteers for a ministry project while others simply need childcare so they can enjoy a date with their spouses. The level of need and the types of needs will differ with each missionary. Accordingly, the care provider could mobilize churches and individuals to help meet these basic and unique needs. In short, the care provider should find intentional ways to bless the missionaries multiple times a year. The intentional blessings will remind the missionaries that they are loved and appreciated. The affirmation that comes from these efforts will also help missionaries stay encouraged and healthy so that they can continue to serve.

Third, the care provider would make sure that missionaries receive extra love and support during difficult times. Missionaries face times of intense struggle just like all believers. Times of intense struggle could involve mourning the death of a family member, having to relocate, or suffering interpersonal conflict with close friends or family members. These types of struggles are common throughout life. However, the

struggles can be intensified for those missionaries who already serve in stressful environments, which are often far from home. Hence, care providers should be present during these times. Furthermore, care providers can work hard to make a way for missionaries to go home or to another place of rest where they can receive healing and hope during difficult seasons. The care provider must know what is going on beneath the surface in the missionaries' lives so that they can provide extra support when necessary. Providing extra support during difficult times will help prevent loneliness, depression, and burnout, and it will remind the missionaries of God's provision of hope and healing for his people during difficult times.

### **Circle of Support**

Every missionary needs a circle of support. A circle of support refers to a group of people who understand and affirm the role of an intercultural missionary. They function as a community for the missionary and a source of immediate assistance with both big and small challenges throughout his or her life. The missionary would be responsible for establishing his or her own circle of support. Champions and care providers could assist in this process by suggesting people that may be interested in serving on a circle of support team. Circles of support could vary in size depending on the preference of the missionary. The people in an ideal circle of support would have missions experience and understand the unique challenges of intercultural missionaries in North America. They may be from the missionary's local church or from an assortment of local churches. Some members of a circle of support may even live far away from the missionary. However, it is important that the majority of members are local and in a position to encourage and serve the missionary in person.

Neal Pirollo's book *Serving as Senders* directly supports the concept of developing circles of support for missionaries. The book is designed to help local churches develop support teams for their missionaries. Pirollo challenges support teams to provide moral, logistical, financial, prayer, communication, and re-entry support for missionaries. He writes,

A cross-cultural worker needs the support of a team of people while he is preparing to go, while he is on the field and when he returns home. A careful reading of Paul's missionary letters will reveal how much time he spent talking to his support team – those who were involved with him in the ministry. Sometimes he complimented them, sometimes he expressed his loneliness in being away from them, sometimes he exhorted and challenged them. But he always thanked God for them. A support team of senders is just as critical to a missionary today.<sup>136</sup>

The same truths apply for domestic missionaries. They need a team of compassionate people that surround them and provide care and holistic support. Another helpful resource that supports the concept of a circle of support is Kenneth William's article "A Model for Mutual Care in Missions." William explains how fellow missionaries can form support networks for each other. His advice to missionaries to surround themselves with other like-minded missionaries for the purpose of providing care for each other is a great example of a missionary care circle of support.<sup>137</sup>

Furthermore, circles of support would fulfill several vital functions related to missionary care. First, they would provide the type of Christian community that God desires for all believers (John 17:20-21). Christian communities are to be places where love, unity, and mutual support thrive. The early church modeled this type of community.

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<sup>136</sup>Pirollo, *Serving as Senders*, 16.

<sup>137</sup>Kenneth Williams, "A Model for Mutual Care in Missions," in *Missionary Care: Counting the Cost for World Evangelization*, ed. Kelly O'Donnell (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1992), 46.

In Acts 2:42, believers broke bread daily with each other, worshiped God together, and shared their resources so that no one had a need. Circles of support should provide this type of community for intercultural missionaries. A strong circle of support would ensure that missionaries overcome feelings of isolation and loneliness by providing a web of relational resources to help navigate the challenges of life and ministry. Furthermore, a strong circle of support would provide the type of accountability and encouragement needed for missionaries to pursue healthy choices in all areas of their lives.

Second, circles of support would provide care for the entire missionary family. Most missionaries who participated in this study were married. Several of the wives lamented about the loneliness they endured while their husband received the majority of attention from Baptist leaders. If the missionary family had strong circles of support around them, the wives and children would have people in their lives that were sensitive to their needs as a missionary family. Ideally, wives would no longer be starved for adult conversation. Further, the missionary's children would be surrounded by peers who reinforce Christian values. Hence, strong circles of support would involve built in layers of support for the whole family that address the needs of husbands, wives, and children.

Third, circles of support would bless the missionary in practical ways. They could spend time with him or her in recreational activities or provide assistance with ministry events. Circles of support could be called upon in times of emergency or simply be there when the missionary needs a friend or they could be an invaluable resource in times of struggle by providing meals. Countless ways exist for people in these circles of support to bless missionaries. A missionary's knowing that he or she has a dependable group of people they can call on at any time to help with anything is invaluable.



Fourth, circles of support could provide consistent prayer support. An intercultural missionary should be able to share their most sensitive prayer concerns with a group of people. Further, the missionary should be able to trust this group to understand issues related to their security and confidentiality. A strong circle of support could provide this type of prayer support. Again, it is impossible to place a value on the missionary knowing they have a dependable group of people praying and seeking God on their behalf on a consistent basis.

### **Conclusion**

The combined efforts of missionary care champions, care providers, and circles of support would greatly increase the level of missionary care among Southern Baptist intercultural missionaries. These three layers of support would create a network of care and a web of resources that would greatly bless our missionaries. Each layer of support would ensure that missionaries were receiving holistic, quality care. Each layer of support, moreover, would provide a platform to address the issues that the missionaries raised regarding their current level of care.

While not an easy task, Baptist entities would have to work hard to identify missionary care champions and care providers. Similarly, missionaries would have to work hard to identify people willing to serve in their circles of support. It is likely, however, that qualified individuals already exist within the ranks of the sixteen million Southern Baptists in North America.

The NAMB, state conventions, associations, and local churches need to lend their support to improve the level of missionary care in North America. Such a commitment would doubtless cost time, money, and energy to create. However, the need

for more missionaries to stay healthy and serve longer on the frontlines justifies the sacrifice. At a minimum, the NAMB, state conventions, associations, and local churches need to affirm the importance of missionary care and clarify the expectations missionaries should have regarding the care they deserve. Any Baptist entity that takes the initiative to commission a missionary should have a plan in place to care for them. Commissioning missionaries with no plan for care is reckless and irresponsible. South Baptists can do better and they must. Intercultural missionaries have communicated clearly that they need better missionary care. Southern Baptists now have a decision to make. Will they prioritize domestic missionary care and respond to the needs of the missionaries who are serving on the frontlines?

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION

This dissertation has explored the contemporary conditions and challenges of Southern Baptist intercultural missionaries serving in North America for the purpose of determining how Southern Baptists can improve their level of care. The dissertation was guided by three basic questions: How are the missionaries doing? What challenges are they facing? How can Southern Baptists better care for their needs? The spiritual, physical, emotional, and financial conditions of the missionaries received special attention. An effort was made to identify challenges that are unique to intercultural missionaries in the North American context. Finally, the data obtained from the missionaries informed the steps Southern Baptists can take to improve the level of care for their domestic missionaries.

The dissertation was designed to function as a message from the frontline missionaries to the broader Southern Baptist family. The message from the missionaries communicated clearly the need for better missionary care. Missionaries need people in their lives who will push them toward spiritual, physical, emotional, and financial health. They need people who understand the challenges they face and who affirm the ministries they lead. The intercultural missionaries need care champions, care providers, and circles of support that listen to them and help them thrive in their missionary contexts. In short,

the missionaries need to know and experience the support of the churches that send them to engage the nations.

Southern Baptist leaders have a significant responsibility and opportunity to improve missionary care in North America. Southern Baptist leaders can ensure that no missionary feels alone on the frontlines. Southern Baptist leaders can ensure that no missionaries have to suffer silently under the weight of financial stress or spiritual oppression. God has blessed the SBC with abundant resources that could be leveraged to provide quality missionary care for every intercultural missionary in North America. Tremendous potential exists, therefore, to respond to the missionary care needs of intercultural missionaries serving in North America.

Multiple questions, however, related to improving the level of missionary care still remain unanswered. The message communicated by the intercultural missionaries serves as a conversation starter, but, as is the case in all conversations, questions remain that need further exploration, including questions related to the challenges of identifying intercultural missionaries and funding missionary care. Multiple critical and complex topics fall under these two broad categories that deserve further exploration in future research endeavors.

### **Identifying Intercultural Missionaries**

The challenge of identifying intercultural missionaries is critical because Southern Baptist intercultural missionaries need a simple method of communicating their presence and acknowledging their desire to receive care. It is impossible to launch a missionary care strategy without this simple step of communication and identification. As mentioned in chapter 1, no one knows the exact number of intercultural missionaries

serving in North America. The number could be as high as 1,000.<sup>138</sup> Currently, no clear mechanism exists for Southern Baptists to identify themselves as intercultural missionaries. The closest options that exist are NAMB's self-funded roles of an Evangelism Catalyst or a Church Planting Catalyst.<sup>139</sup> However, these are broad categories that include all sorts of affinity-based ministries. These categories could be leveraged to help identify the missionaries, however this is not their intended purpose. Further research is thus needed to determine the best way for intercultural missionaries to identify themselves and acknowledge their desire to receive missionary care.

The identification of intercultural missionaries is also a complex topic. The topic is complex because further research is needed to determine how to best define who qualifies as an intercultural missionary. Is everyone that intentionally shares the gospel with a foreign-born immigrant an intercultural missionary? Must one have a church planting focus to be considered an intercultural missionary? Must one serve a certain number of hours a week? Should some type of missionary assessment take place before the title of intercultural missionary is bestowed upon a person? The complexity of these questions increases when one considers the cost of providing quality missionary care. If

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<sup>138</sup>An accurate estimation of the number of missionaries depends on how one defines an intercultural missionary. If one counts all the workers who would self-identify themselves as missionaries, then the number would exceed 1,000 missionaries. This number assumes that the top 100 Metropolitan Statistical Areas in North America have at least 10 people engaging the international communities in their areas. Cities like Atlanta, Louisville, Kansas City, New York, San Francisco, and Dallas are home to over 30 intercultural missionaries each. Hence, the number of missionaries could easily exceed 1,000 if other large cities had over 10 missionaries serving in them. The vast majority of these workers are bi-vocational and engage in intercultural missions in their spare time. They may volunteer at ESL ministries or work with international students. Nevertheless, their contribution to penetrating lostness in North America is significant.

<sup>139</sup>For more information on the pathways to missions that the NAMB provides, see "Adult Missionary Opportunities," <https://www.namb.net/adult-missionary-opportunities/> (accessed April 23, 2013).

the SBC determined that it cost \$2,000 a year to provide quality care for one missionary, then some type of qualifying process would have to be in place to determine who would receive missionary care resources.<sup>140</sup> Further research is needed to define the roles, qualifications, and responsibilities of those who would embrace the title of intercultural missionary.

### **Funding Missionary Care**

The topic of funding missionary care is critical for any effort to improve missionary care. However, the true cost of funding missionary care is unknown. Many variables exist that make this a difficult number to determine. For instance, do care champions and care providers need to be compensated for their services? Do missionaries serving in more expensive contexts need more money allocated for care than missionaries in less expensive contexts? Should more missionary care money be allocated to married couples than to single adults? Does the number of children in a family affect the cost of missionary care for that family? Does it cost the same to provide care for new missionaries as it does for experienced missionaries? Where would this money come from?

The steps to improving missionary care proposed in this dissertation need to be field tested to help determine the cost of providing quality missionary care. Field testing would help determine how the different Southern Baptist entities could work together to provide domestic missionary care. Furthermore, field testing would help determine a per-

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<sup>140</sup>\$2,000 is a hypothetical number used for the sake of the illustration.

missionary cost estimate that would be critical for taking the necessary steps to improve missionary care.

The challenge of funding missionary care is a complex topic. Financial assistance was the most frequent request made by the missionaries in this study. Hence, frustration could erupt if more money started being spent on the care of the missionaries as opposed to the direct support of the missionaries. For instance, a missionary may appreciate a direct gift of \$100 instead spending that same \$100 on an expensive banquet to honor them. In addition, if missionary care champions and care providers were funded, then there would be fewer financial resources available to provide direct funding to missionaries. Again, it is hard to justify spending more money on the care of missionaries versus the direct funding of missionaries. At some point, a decision would have to be made as to whether it was more cost effective to simply give money to the missionaries or use money to provide quality care. In a perfect world, enough money would exist to do both. Limited resources, however, necessitate thinking of creative ways to solve the complex tension between giving directly to missionaries and funding missionary care initiatives.

### **Conclusion**

The importance of providing care for SBC intercultural missionaries grows as more immigrants flood the shores of North America. The increased size and scope of the mission field will require a larger missionary force. More missionaries will only accentuate the need for improved levels of missionary care. This study indicates that frontline missionaries have real needs. They have stories that need to be heard. They have wounds that need to be healed. Southern Baptist leaders have an amazing

opportunity to respond to these needs. Southern Baptists could be the pace setters for intercultural missionary care in North America. Southern Baptists could be instrumental in establishing a network of champions, care providers, and circles of support to better serve their intercultural missionaries. The missionaries have communicated their message. They remain in the trenches awaiting a response.



## APPENDIX 1

### SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

#### **Agreement to Participate**

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to explore the condition and challenges of cross-cultural missionaries serving in North America. This research is being conducted by Trent DeLoach for purposes of his dissertation research. In this research, you will answer questions about your spiritual, physical, financial, and emotional condition. In addition, you will answer questions about the challenges you face and how Southern Baptists could improve their level of care for domestic cross-cultural missionaries. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.*

By your completion of this survey, and signing your name below, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

#### **General Information**

1. Are you a member of a Southern Baptist church? Yes or No
2. General Size of Church Membership:
3. A cross-cultural missionary is someone who intentionally and consistently crosses cultural and often linguistic boundaries to share the gospel. Do you view yourself as a cross-cultural missionary in North America? Yes or No
4. Age Bracket: 18-29 30-39 40-49 50-59 60-69 70+
5. Highest level of education:
6. Name of city and state:

7. Circle: male or female
8. Circle: single or married
9. If married, do you have children: Yes or No If Yes- what are their ages?
10. How long have you served as a cross-cultural missionary in North America?
11. How many hours do you serve in a normal ministry week?
12. Please check all that apply concerning how your ministry is funded:
- Fully funded by a Southern Baptist entity like NAMB, State, and/or Association
  - Partially funded by a Southern Baptist entity like NAMB, State, and/or Association
  - Fully funded by one local church
  - At least half your salary provided by one local church
  - Bi-vocational and raise some ministry support
  - Tentmaker and do not raise any other ministry support
  - Personally raise full support
  - Spouse works full-time so you can serve
13. Which people group(s) do you work among?
14. Which major world religion(s) do you encounter the most?

### Spiritual Condition

<b>very weak</b>	<b>weak</b>		<b>average</b>		<b>strong</b>		<b>very strong</b>		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

15. Based on the scale above, how would rate your consistency in the following areas?
- Prayer life
  - Scripture reading
  - Fasting
  - Fellowship with church family
  - Pursuit of holiness
  - Evangelism
  - Taking a day of rest
16. Based on the scale above, how would you rate your overall relationship with Jesus?
17. Based on the following three options, how has your missionary role affected your spiritual life?    **Negatively**    **No Effect**    **Positively**

18. Can you please explain your answer to the question #17?

**Physical Condition**

**very weak**      **weak**                      **average**                      **strong**                      **very strong**  
**1**      **2**      **3**      **4**      **5**      **6**      **7**      **8**      **9**      **10**

19. Based on the scale above, how would you rate your consistency in the following areas?

- Healthy diet
- Adequate rest
- Normal energy levels
- Regular exercise

20. Based on the scale above, how would you rate your overall physical health?

21. Based on the following three options, how has your missionary role affected your physical life?    **Negatively**    **No Effect**    **Positively**

22. Can you please explain your answer to question #21?

**Financial Condition**

**very weak**      **weak**                      **average**                      **strong**                      **very strong**  
**1**      **2**      **3**      **4**      **5**      **6**      **7**      **8**      **9**      **10**

23. Based on the scale above, how would you rate your consistency in the following areas?

- Tithe faithfully
- Avoid debt (excluding home)
- Live within means most months
- Earn enough to cover needs most months
- Able to save for the future most months

24. Based on the scale above, how would you rate your overall financial health?

25. Based on the following three options, how has your missionary role affected your financial life?    **Negatively**    **No Effect**    **Positively**

26. Can you please explain your answer to question #25?

### Emotional Condition

**very weak**      **weak**      **average**      **strong**      **very strong**  
1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

27. Based on the scale above, how would you rate the *intensity* of the following items in your life?

- Stress
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Loneliness
- Interpersonal conflict
- Burnout

28. Based on the scale above, how would you rate the *presence* of the following items in your life?

- Peace
- Joy
- Contentment
- Confidence in Christ
- Healthy relationship with spouse (put N/A if not applicable)
- Healthy relationship with children (put N/A if not applicable)
- Healthy relationship with extended family
- Healthy relationship with friends

29. Based on the scale above, how would you rate your overall emotional health?

30. Based on the following three options, how has your missionary role affected your emotional life?    **Negatively**    **No Effect**    **Positively**

31. Can you please explain your answer to question #30?



**Evaluating the Care from Southern Baptist Entities**

**very weak**      **weak**      **average**      **strong**      **very strong**  
**1**      **2**      **3**      **4**      **5**      **6**      **7**      **8**      **9**      **10**

35. Based on the scale above, how would rate the following areas?

- \_\_\_ Your relationship with your local church
- \_\_\_ Your relationship with you local Baptist association
- \_\_\_ Your relationship with your state convention
- \_\_\_ Your relationship with the North American Mission Board

36. Circle the letter grade you would give Southern Baptists related to level of care they provide for domestic cross-cultural missionaries based on your experience?

A+   A   A-   B+   B   B-   C+   C   C-   D+   D   D-   F

37. What have Southern Baptists done to care for you?

38. What could Southern Baptists do to improve their care for you?

39. Who do you know that could qualify to take this survey? They need to be at least 18 years old, a member of a Southern Baptist church, and view themselves as a cross-cultural missionary in North America. Please provide their email addresses.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

40. May I call you to do a phone interview that further explores the topics covered in this survey? Yes or No. If yes, please list preferred number and best time to call.

## APPENDIX 2

### QUALITATIVE INTERVIEW

#### **Agreement to Participate**

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to explore the condition and challenges of cross-cultural missionaries serving in North America. This research is being conducted by Trent DeLoach for purposes of his dissertation research. In this research, you will answer questions about your spiritual, physical, financial, and emotional condition. In addition, you will answer questions about the challenges you face and how Southern Baptists could improve their level of care for domestic cross-cultural missionaries. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.*

By your completion of this interview, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

1. How did you get involved in cross-cultural ministry in North America?
2. What motivated you to start serving as a missionary?
3. What does your ministry look like on a weekly basis?
4. What is the toughest challenge you face as a cross-cultural missionary?
5. What other significant challenges do you face?
6. How is your ministry funded?
7. What kind of missionary training have you received?
8. Do you have a ministry coach or someone to share your struggles with?

9. Who encourages you the most to keep persevering in your ministry?
10. How does your ministry affect your spiritual, physical, emotional, and financial life?
11. How does your ministry affect your family life?
12. How is your relationship with your local church, association, state convention, and NAMB?
13. How well do you feel understood and cared for by the broader Southern Baptist family?
14. How could Southern Baptist improve their level of care for you?
15. If you had ten minutes to address all of the prominent leaders of the Southern Baptist Convention, what would you tell them related to importance of missionary care in North America?



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## ABSTRACT

### IMPROVING THE LEVEL OF CARE FOR SOUTHERN BAPTIST INTERCULTURAL MISSIONARIES SERVING IN NORTH AMERICA

Trent Isaac DeLoach, D.Miss.  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2013  
Chair: Dr. J. D. Payne

This dissertation explores the contemporary conditions and challenges of Southern Baptist cross-cultural missionaries serving in North America for the purpose of determining how Southern Baptists can improve the level of care for their domestic missionaries. The dissertation will be guided by three basic questions: How are the missionaries doing? What challenges are they facing? How can Southern Baptists better care for their needs? The spiritual, physical, emotional, and financial condition of the missionaries will receive special attention. An effort will be made to identify challenges that are unique to cross-cultural missionaries in the North American context. Finally, the data obtained from the missionaries will determine how Southern Baptists can improve the level of care for its domestic missionaries.

Chapter 2 describes the significance of cross-cultural missions in North America. Research will be presented that reveals the growing gap between the diversity of North America and the diversity found within Southern Baptist churches.

Chapter 3 presents the results from the qualitative research gained from the surveys, interviews, and site visits. Special attention is paid to the spiritual, physical, emotional, and financial condition of the missionaries. The missionaries' assessment of the care they are receiving from the Southern Baptist entities concludes the chapter.



Chapter 4 provides a response and an interpretation of the data collected from the study. Strengths and weaknesses of Southern Baptist care for cross-cultural missionaries in North America are explored.

Chapter 5 concludes the study by presenting a strategy to improve missionary care in North America among Southern Baptists. The strategy includes practical steps that can be taken to ensure Southern Baptists remain on the frontlines of engaging the nations in North America.

Chapter 6 reviews the salient observations from the study and presents areas that need further research.

## VITA

Trent Isaac DeLoach

### EDUCATIONAL

Diploma, Glennville Christian Academy, Glennville, Georgia

B.A. Pastoral Ministries, Toccoa Falls College, 2002

M.Div., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2006

D.Miss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2013

### MINISTERIAL

Missionary, North American Mission Board, 2009-

Pastor, Antioch Church, Louisville, Kentucky 2011-

### ACADEMIC

Adjunct Professor, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 2011-

Adjunct Professor, Boyce College, 2012-