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Stepping out in long-term missions during a pandemic—Why not?

Riding backwards
About 30 years ago, my friends had a station wagon with an extra bench seat in the back that faced backwards. Since my family never had a car like that, I wanted to be among the two lucky passengers to ride backwards as we went to my friends’ house after church. But after a time or two, I quickly realized that riding backwards was no fun. When you can’t see the road ahead, you don’t know what to expect, so your head and stomach begin to respond with a dull and uneasy feeling. I certainly wouldn’t want to do that for a long period of time!
Riding backwards is a good analogy for living in these days. We can’t easily see the road ahead. Will work, school, and church life return to some predictable pattern? Will we be able to enjoy life without fear of contracting or passing on a highly contagious and potentially deadly illness? What about travel?

**The temptation to change course**

This life of uncertainty has a strong effect on our plans. Those of you who desire to obey Christ as a missionary are now asking, “Is it really wise in times of such uncertainty to make plans for the mission field?” You factor in the financial uncertainty that may affect support raising. You weigh up the health risks of stepping out of your safe place at home. You wonder if you’ll still have easy access to family and friends should there be a need to return suddenly. You worry about being locked down in a strange place left to uncomfortable isolation. Should these concerns keep you from stepping out in obedience to Christ?

**God sends**

Consider this: God has an answer for each concern. He will lead you as you faithfully follow Him. Our short-term (1-2 years) and long-term missionaries will attest to this. Despite churches being closed for an extended part of 2020, God has provided financial support. I can think of 10 of our 25 support-raising missionaries that have reached or are nearing full support because of new support in the last six months. **God can and is doing it!**
What about travel restrictions? Certainly, departure plans have to be held loosely, and some are still waiting for doors to open. However, many of our missionaries are finding ways to get on planes and get to the field. Yes, it has required COVID-19 testing, extra documentation, and quarantines, but the gospel message is urgent and requires sacrifice and persistence from God’s servants.

For some, survey trips are a deciding factor in committing to missions—and these trips are more difficult right now. Let me encourage you to remember your history. Many great missionary movements occurred when travel by ship was the only option, making survey trips unrealistic. These missionaries simply knew that in Africa, Asia, or beyond, Christless nations awaited the life-changing message of salvation. They had faith to make plans to go, to urge their fellow Christians to support the work, and to step out despite not knowing exactly what awaited them. As was often the case then and is true today, missionary teams are in place and eagerly await the arrival of your help.
They want to welcome you and give you the best transition possible. What could keep you back from trusting God and obeying His command? Where we face obstacles to God’s will, God always makes a way.

May our God who has commanded us to go, grant you faith to embrace the uncertainty and follow Him to the nations!

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*Are you called to serve or do you think you might be? Visit www.bmm.org to find out more about our career missionary, short-term, internships, and other missions programs. Applications are now being accepted for all programs.*