



Your First 90 Days on the Field

We want you to thrive as you go where God has called you. We know you are excited about what God has called you “do.” We are excited about that too. We want to remind you that God is just as enamored with who he has called you to “be” while you’re on the field.

Honestly, how well you do at “*being who God has called you do be*” will directly impact how long you “*do what God has called you do.*” That is why we developed this tool for you during your first 3 months on the field. We pray it does three things:

1. **Helps you bond with your team effectively.** *Missionaries need the church too.* You’re not just called to plant church, but to be a part of the church. Don’t ever forget this.
2. **Help you identify key self-care practices in a cross-cultural setting.** *You’re not God’s employee; you’re his child.* God takes no delight when his children abuse themselves in the name of the family business. Burnout is not the Purple Heart of ministry.
3. **Help your advocate and pastoral team know to care for you best.** Those who know you best now will see you least after you move. This means the degree of intentionality in communication with them will need to be greater in order to provide a comparable level of care to what they’ve provided up until now.

During your first month, we encourage you to read and journal through [First 30 Daze by Larry and Susan McCrary](#). Your first month on the field will be rich with so many first experiences that it would be easy to miss/forget them all. Larry and Susan have put together an excellent devotional and reflective guide to help you in your transition. Many of the things you’ll want to share in the conversations we encourage below will be cultivated in these readings and reflections.

Several parts of the four tasks below will become part of your ongoing habits to ensure that you are physically, emotionally, relationally, and spiritually healthy as you seek to serve God well for the full tenure of time you are on the field.

Task One: Get to Know & Serve Your Team

Meet with *each* member of your team individually or as a couple. Have meaningful conversations around the following questions. This conversation might be a day of prayer walking through your city or a series of meal conversations.

- Discuss how each of you grew up, where you’ve lived, when you came to faith, and were called to the field.
- Ask your team mate to describe their time in your new city (highlights, lowlights, and general observations).
- Consider meeting at one of their favorite places in the city and ask why it has become their favorite.
- Share the insecurities and temptations that are most common for you and ask about theirs.
- Discuss, “What is most important to each of you in a good friend?”
- Discuss the key practices that contribute to your emotional health. What are your personal hobbies or interests?
- Discuss, “What is the best way to share new ideas or concerns on this team?”
- What have been the most difficult experiences in the history of this team? What would be the easiest ways that I might unintentionally aggravate or contribute to this history?
- What are the next anticipated transitions or key markers in the life of this team?

During your first 90 days on your team look for intentional ways to serve each team member. The conversations above should give you information about what would be most meaningful and beneficial for each team member. On a healthy team every team-member contributes to an other-minded, service-oriented culture on that team.

The intent of these conversations is three-fold: (1) to build the quality of relationships that will help you feel less alone in a cross-cultural setting, (2) to cultivate the kind of community that will allow your team to be the church for you, and (3) to grow the level of trust that will allow you navigate conflict better – remember, team conflict is the #1 reason people return from the field early. Invest in the relationships early so you have the capital to navigate difficult things later.

From these conversations, identify the team member(s) that is the best-fit to meet with weekly for prayer, encouragement, and accountability; share who this is with your advocate and pastoral support person.



Task Two: Monitor Your Body's Acclimation

Monitor when your sleeping and eating habits adapt to a healthy normal in your new setting. These are the strongest indicators that your body is feeling “at home” in its new cultural setting.

Once you've baselined your physical adaptation to the new setting, then (unless there is illness) you can allow changes in your eating or sleeping habits to serve as “yellow flags” that you are facing emotional or relational challenges that should be discussed with your closest team friend, advocate, and pastoral support person.

Share your progress and stability in these key areas:

- 7-8 hours of sleep each night
- Quality of appetite (neither loss of appetite, nor comfort eating)
- Time for a weekly prayer, encouragement, and accountability meeting with your closest team friend
- A few hours of engaging your personal interest each week; loss of pleasure in (or guilt about) things you normally enjoy is an early warning sign for either depression or burnout

Task Three: Hold the Rope Being Held

Talk to your advocate and pastoral support person at least three times during the first 90 days. Differences in time zones, acclimation to the new culture, and investing in your new can be a distraction from connecting with those who agreed to “hold the rope” at home.

If you neglect to stay regularly connected with your support team, then you are likely to feel more alone and less supported during a difficult time on the field. Letting your support team know about the incremental ups and downs of your transition is important for them to know how to adequately care or celebrates in the high-highs and low-lows that may come.

Task Four: Discovering Your (Actual) Job Description

Write out your team role like a job description. Each time your role changes update this document. Allow this document to be a reference point to ensure that role is clear, satisfying, and sustainable. Share how it changes (because it will) with your advocate and pastoral support person each time you speak.

Note: Your team leader should have to the opportunity to speak into and offer feedback on this job description (initially and with each adaptation) before you share it with your advocate and pastoral support person.

With each adaptation ask support people to ask you:

- What part of these changes are you most excited about?
- What part of these changes did you accept for the betterment of the team?
- Is there a positive balance in your role between what you enjoy and where you're sacrificing?
- Is there adequate time for rest, devotion, friendship, and personal interests?
- Are there any tensions from these changes, which if unaddressed, with jeopardize the unity of the team?
- How can I be praying for fruitfulness in these changes?

As your role on the team forms and adapts, these are crucial seasons in your satisfaction on the field. Generating self-awareness through healthy conversation about the initial formation of your role and changes is an essential part of protecting team unity and maintaining a high personal morale.

Task Five: Live in Ongoing Community

Complete the [“Community” evaluation](#) (which examines at how balanced your one another life is) at least monthly during your first three months on the field. Share these results with your closest team friend, advocate, and pastoral support person.

If there other areas of balanced Christian living where you need accountability and these evaluations prove to be an effective ways for you to initiate meaningful conversations with your support team, then decide which ones and what interval will be part of your ongoing care plan.