

How to Think Like a Missionary

A missionary is someone who crosses lines of culture to introduce other people to the love and forgiveness found in Jesus Christ. It is someone who leaves the safety, familiarity and comfort of their “natural” environment to cross boundaries into a “different” culture to impact them for Jesus Christ.

The greatest missionary who ever lived was Jesus Christ who left the glory and comfort of heaven to dwell among people on earth. He made the ultimate jump across cultural barriers. The book of John tells us that Jesus became flesh and came to earth to “dwell” among us. (John 1:1 and 14) When Jesus came to earth the first time, the overwhelming majority of people did not receive Him, not even “His own” people the Jews (John 1:12).

Jesus went on to prepare His future disciples through the ages, including us, for the response they could anticipate when they follow Him while living in a spiritually lost world.

“If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.” – John 15:18-19

This doesn’t mean that everyone will hate or oppose Christians. It does not mean that you will be physically attacked or assaulted. It does mean that as you venture out as a missionary into a spiritually dark world, you will often face a built-in resistance and opposition as you identify with Christ.

To begin to think like a missionary, you must start with this understanding. That way you won’t take people’s questions, apathy or even verbal opposition personally. It may not be you or your personality that they are opposing or ignoring, but more likely the reality of Christ and His ways that they see in you.

Now let’s consider some exciting realities that we can count on as we think like a missionary on a school campus.

Missionaries are “on a mission” with God.

Jesus promised to go with all Christians as they minister in a needy world and attempt to reach those who are eternally lost (Matthew 28:19-20). He will go with you as you seek to minister on campus. You are not alone!

Missionaries begin to minister where God is already working around them.

As a Campus Missionary, it is very important to be spiritually alert and responsive when the doors for ministry open around you. Wherever you go, God is "already there first." Look for the ways He is already softening hearts and creating opportunities for you to minister in His name.

Missionaries target specific people groups and introduce them to Jesus Christ.

As global missionaries move to a distant country, they generally do not aim to reach that entire nation. Instead, they pray and discern which specific people group within the nation they should invest their time in reaching. Likewise, you may have specific groups of students on your school campus that God has allowed you to have special access to, such as a sports team, student government, a club on campus, or each of your classes.

Missionaries work best in teams and in partnership with other believers.

Before you take on the role of Campus Missionary, be sure to start by finding a team to join you in prayer and sharing an outreach commitment at your school. Do you know of at least two others you can link up with to begin a Prayer Triplet or a trio of like-minded servant-leaders on your campus? (See Ecclesiastes 4: 9, 10.)

Missionaries work hard to understand the culture of those they seek to reach.

Once they understand the Scriptures for themselves, Campus Missionaries should be sure to relate eternal truths in understandable language, guarding against speaking with words that only long-term Christians use and understand. You may want to find or produce simple written tools to help you share the good news of Jesus on your campus.

Missionaries have a deep sense of being "called by God" to their field of ministry.

As a Campus Missionary, your own personal relationship with God and a confident assurance that He wants you to minister on your campus will keep you passionate and focused in ministry, helping you weather any storms or potential discouragement. Be sure to let others know of your commitment to be a Campus Missionary and let them stand with you in prayer and encouragement.

Finally, realize that as a Campus Missionary, you are in the midst of an awesome move of God!

His desire is that "none should perish" (2 Peter 3: 9, 10) and by His Spirit, He will work with you so that your friends and others on your campus will come to know Him personally. Your role as a Campus Missionary is huge in God's worldwide plan!

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