

SPIRITUAL, FAMILY, AND MINISTRY SATISFACTION AMONG MISSIONARIES

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Missionaries function within overlapping communities or subsystems which comprise the larger cross-cultural missions system. This study assumed a synergistic relationship among these subsystems of spiritual life, family life, and vocational ministry. Stability among relationships and processes within each of these subsystems is important to the well-being of missionaries and the advancement of the Gospel. Presumably, satisfaction among missionaries contributes to stability within each of these subsystems as well as to the global cross-cultural mission system. The focus of this study was the interrelationship of missionaries' satisfaction with their spiritual lives, family lives, and vocational ministries. A number of significant results were observed. Missionaries in this study typically registered high levels of satisfaction with their family lives, vocational ministries, and spiritual lives. The practice of selected spiritual disciplines was positively associated with spiritual life satisfaction. Family life satisfaction, spousal dynamics, and spiritual life satisfaction correlated positively with each other. Perception of one's family of origin correlated significantly with current spousal and family relationships. Finally, missionaries who experienced their missions of affiliation as promoting and encouraging opportunities for their spiritual growth and nurture experienced higher levels of ministry satisfaction, missionary status satisfaction, and family life satisfaction.

Missionaries and their children confront multiple stressors and strains, some of which are compounded by the cross-cultural settings in which they serve. On the one hand, such within-family issues as roles and responsibilities,

communication, work, and school are similar to those any family might face. On the other hand, missionaries sometimes feel conflicted by these issues because of frequent transitions, repeated separations, limited finances, and a more narrow band of available supporting relationships.

The well-being of the missionary family is crucial to the ability of the missionary to fulfill his or her vocational commitment. Life is synergistic, with each aspect interfacing with and influencing other aspects of an individual's personal functioning and subsequent life satisfaction (Friedman, 1985). General satisfaction in one domain is likely to influence satisfaction in other areas and vice versa. For purposes of this study, family life, vocational ministry, and spiritual life were adopted as the critical factors interacting with one another and subsequently contributing to a missionary's overall life satisfaction. Better understanding a missionary's family dynamics is important to assessing how the multiple systems in which missionaries function overlap and interrelate.

FAMILY LIFE

Various researchers have affirmed different aspects of the crucial role that families exert in a missionary's vocational effectiveness. O'Donnell (1987) theorized that three types of developmental stages comprise the North American mission family life cycle: 6 family life cycle stages, 8 mission stages, and 10 psychosocial individual stages. He concluded that "an increased awareness of individual, family, and cross-cultural issues will promote the current and future health of the mission family" (p. 287). Powell (1998) identified the five qualities of trust, openness, unity, interdependence, and love, along with faith and hope, as "almost always present in a healthy functioning family" (pp. 190-195). Wickstrom (1978) demonstrated that boarding or nonboarding did not negatively affect a

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missionary kid's (MK's) self-esteem, but it was significantly affected by relationships with his or her parents. One aspect of Britt's (1983) research correlated the success of a group of missionaries working in Europe and their relationships with their fathers in early life. MK Consultation and Research Team/Committee on Research and Endowment (CART/CORE) identified warmth and closeness to one's father as positively correlated with an MK's return to overseas service as a vocational missionary (Andrews, 1995). A more complete understanding of the missionary family should enable mission agencies to better care for those they serve as well as increase their effectiveness in fulfilling the Great Commission.

VOCATIONAL MINISTRY

Individuals likely become cross-cultural missionaries for multiple reasons that are sociological ("the need is great"), psychological ("doing something meaningful"), and theological ("God called me"). Obedience to the Great Commission (extrinsic) and response to a sense of personal call (intrinsic) represent the outer and inner theological dimensions, respectively, most frequently cited by prospective candidates as their motivation for becoming missionaries. Fulfilling one's missionary vocation with satisfaction is best realized when ministry flows out of an obedient lifestyle and even more so when coupled with a personal sense of call.

Missionary attrition is a relatively recent phenomenon going back to the early 1960s. At that time, according to Donovan and Myers (1997), most missionaries professed a "mystical" sense of call, whereas today missionaries expect the "best fit" between their spiritual gifts, natural abilities, and interest. Scripture does teach that spiritual gifts form the basis for Christian ministry (Rom. 12; 1 Cor. 12; Eph. 4), so it seems reasonable for prospective missionaries to expect their future mission agencies to match their gifts to particular cross-cultural ministries. Such is not always the case, however; all too often missionaries become disenchanted with their roles while trying to function as "square pegs in a round hole." Gift-match in ministry coupled with a clear call to ministry should contribute to enhanced satisfaction in ministry.

SPIRITUAL LIFE

Even as missionaries are formed within their family-of-origin systems, so also the spiritual life of a

Christian is formed within the context of a community of faith. Spiritual formation is "a process of being conformed to the image of Jesus Christ for the sake of others" (Mulholland, 1993, p. 12). The community of faith with its constellation of supporting relationships provides the locus for spiritual formation. Spiritual disciplines in turn are generally considered a vital part of the process in the formation of one's spiritual life. Spiritual disciplines are variously understood as "regular habit patterns that result in an intimate relationship with God" (Coppedge, 1989, p. 66); "activities of mind and body purposefully undertaken, to bring our personality and total being into effective cooperation with the divine order" (Willard, 1988, p. 86); and "activities we embrace that give room for God to work in our lives" (Wardle, 1998, p. 223).

It was hypothesized that spiritual disciplines practiced in the context of a community of faith characterized by supporting relationships, healthy family relationships in which each member is valued and affirmed and contributes positively to the life of the family, and mission agencies which support and nurture its member families and the spiritual lives of its missionaries together create an optimal environment in which missionaries exhibit high levels of satisfaction and may fulfill their vocational commitment to the Great Commission.

METHOD

The purpose of the MK-Missionary Family Profile (MFP) was to examine the interrelationships of a missionary's spiritual life satisfaction, family life satisfaction, and vocational ministry satisfaction.

Participants

Missionaries participating in the study had to meet four criteria: (a) a career missionary, (b) married, (c) with children ages 7 to 18 years, and (d) on home assignment no more than 15 months. They were identified and recruited for this study by their mission agencies. Participants included 245 missionaries, 127 MK adolescents, and 140 MK children. Most adult subjects had actual field experience (92.9%) and had been on home/furlough assignment 15 months or less. The remaining adult subjects (7.1%) were predeparture, career missionaries within 9 months of departure for their overseas assignment. All missionaries were married and had children ages 7 to 18 years.

Missionaries represented the following eight member missions of MK-CART: AIM International,

CB International, Christian and Missionary Alliance, Mission to the World, OC International, OMF International, SIL/WBT International, and SIM International. In addition, 10% of adult subjects were from nonmember mission(s); their mission(s) was/were not revealed by respondents.

Missionaries in this study, on average, were 43 years old, had been married 18 years, held a baccalaureate degree or higher (93.4%), and had been missionaries 12.5 years. All held either United States or Canadian passports. The variety of ministries they served in their overseas settings were, in rank order: homemaker (19.1%), church planting (14.9%), translation (14.9%), national education, (14.5%), MK education (14.0%), administration (9.4%), office staff (4.3%), communications (3.8%), health profession (3.0%), and pilot (1.7%). The majority of missionaries on home assignment planned to return to their overseas ministry assignments (88.4%).

Adolescent MKs (12 to 18 years old) also participated in the study to explore their perceptions of family relationships. Their average age was 12.5 years. Sixty-five (51.2%) were male, and 62 (48.8%) were female. On average, MKs reported having 2.2 siblings. The largest proportion were firstborn (47.6%), followed by second (31.7%), third (15.1%), fourth (3.2%), and fifth-borns (2.4%).

Instruments

The Missionary Family Profile (MFP) is a researcher-designed instrument developed in consultation with MK-CART mission agencies and pretested by them. The MFP incorporates within it a number of items and scales.

Satisfaction items. The MFP includes satisfaction items for four different dimensions: (a) Family life (FS-I), (b) ministry (role; MR-S), (c) being a missionary (status; MS-S), and (d) spiritual life (SLS). A 5-point Likert-type scale was employed, with 5 representing *very satisfied* and 1, *very dissatisfied*.

Family of Origin Image (FOI). The FOI is a composite of 10 researcher-designed items which assess a participant's perception of dynamics in his or her family of origin. It incorporates such constructs as intrafamily communication, parental treatment of one another, and parental absence. Missionaries responded to each of the 10 items on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 5 (*strongly agree*) to 1 (*strongly disagree*).

Spiritual Life Inventory (SLI). The SLI is a 35-item, researcher-designed instrument utilizing a 5-

point Likert-type scale ranging from 5 (*always*) to 1 (*never*). It assesses three broad areas, including (a) spiritual disciplines (family devotions, personal devotions, prayer, Scripture, and solitude), (b) supporting relationships (confidant, pastor/spiritual friend, prayer partner, and spouse), and (c) intervening factors (attribution, forgiveness, and vocational call and vocational obedience).

Spiritual disciplines constitute specific practices that take place within networks of supporting relationships or community. Intervening factors may interact with and modify satisfaction. Attribution is the capacity to reframe life events in view of God's presence and activity. Forgiveness is the capacity to receive forgiveness both vertically and horizontally as well as to extend forgiveness. Vocational call is a missionary's perception that his or her life and ministry are sustained by a God-given call.

Family Adaptability and Cohesion Scales (FACES II; Olson et al., 1992). FACES II is a 30-item scale which contains two subscales. Family cohesion measures the degree to which family members are separated from or connected to their family and is defined as "the emotional bonding that family members have toward one another" (p. 1). Family adaptability describes the family system's flexibility and ability to change and is defined as "the ability of a marital or family system to change its power structure, role relationships, and relationship rules in response to situational and developmental stress" (p. 1). The alpha reliability for cohesion is .87, for adaptability .78, and for the total scale .90.

Enriching and Nurturing Relationship Issues, Communication and Happiness (ENRICH; Olson et al., 1992). ENRICH contains 125 items and measures 12 marriage and family variables: idealistic distortion, marital satisfaction, personality issues, communication, conflict resolution, financial management, leisure activities, sexual relationship, children and marriage, family and friends, egalitarian roles, and religious orientation. Alpha reliability established among 1,344 individuals (672 couples), ranges from .92 (idealistic distortion) to .48 (sexual relationship). Test-retest reliability, based upon 115 individuals tested at 4-week intervals, ranges from .92 (idealistic distortion and sexual relationship) to .77 (leisure activities). Participants' responses can range from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The Religious Orientation scale was not included in this study.

Family Satisfaction (FL-S; Olson et al., 1992). FL-S is a 14-item scale developed to assess satisfaction with one's family around (a) *Cohesion* (emotional bonding, family boundaries, coalitions, time, space, friends, decision-making, and interests and recreation) and (b) *Adaptability* (assertiveness, control, discipline, negotiation, roles, rules). The alpha reliability for the cohesion subscale is .85, for adaptability .84, for the total score .92 ($N = 2,076$). The test-retest reliability ($N = 106$) is .76, .67, and .75, respectively. FL-S was used with adolescent MKs.

The above scales were incorporated within the larger MFP assessment. These particular standardized instruments were selected because they assess variables considered critical to effective personal and interpersonal functioning that support satisfaction in different life domains and because of their widespread use and the availability of normative data for comparison.

MK-Youth Family Survey. In addition to the above instruments used with missionaries, the MK-Youth Family Survey (YFS), a researcher-designed instrument, was developed for use with adolescent children of missionaries participating in the study. The intent was to establish the MK's perception of family dynamics for comparison with parental perceptions. The YFS contains 14 researcher-designed items and incorporates a Parent-Adolescent Communication inventory, a Family Satisfaction scale (FL-S), and a Family Strengths instrument. For purposes of this article, only the FL-S scores are reported as indicators of the MK's perception of MK satisfaction, family closeness, mother closeness, father closeness, family life satisfaction (FL-I), and school experience.

Procedure

This study was descriptive and correlational in nature. Mission agencies identified participants based upon mutually agreed upon criteria. Sealed family packets were then provided to each mission agency for distribution to their missionary families. Included in the packets were: (a) cover letters from a key leader in the mission agency and the primary researcher; (b) instructions; (c) instruments; (d) a stamped self-addressed envelope for returning the completed questionnaire directly to the researcher; and (e) a stamped, self-addressed 4 x 6 inch card to return to the mission agency indicating the partici-

pant(s) had completed and returned the packet to the researcher.

RESULTS

The findings are reported around the four satisfaction dimensions addressed in this study—spiritual life, family life, ministry (role), and missionary (status) satisfaction.

All four satisfaction dimensions (FL-I, MR-S, MS-S, SL-S) correlated significantly and positively with one another (see Table 1), with the strongest correlations, in order, being between (a) ministry and missionary satisfaction, (b) family life and spiritual life satisfaction, (c) missionary and spiritual life satisfaction, and (d) ministry and spiritual life satisfaction.

Spiritual Life

Descriptive statistics for spiritual life satisfaction will be reported, followed by correlations between overall spiritual life satisfaction (SL-S) and spiritual disciplines, supporting relationships, and intervening factors. Bonferroni corrections were applied to these correlations in order to reduce the risk of false positives, and significance was established at .002 (see Table 2).

The mean score for SL-S was 3.89 with a standard deviation of .81. Four of the five disciplines correlated significantly and positively with spiritual life satisfaction (Table 2). In order of strength of correlation, these were: personal devotions, Scripture, prayer, and solitude. Among the four supporting relationships, spouse, confidant, and pastor/spiritual friend correlated positively and significantly with spiritual life satisfaction, as did each of the three intervening factors of vocational call, forgiveness, and attribution.

The data in this study support the premise that satisfaction with one's spiritual life is nurtured and supported in the context of caring relationships and the practice of the spiritual disciplines. Furthermore, having the capacity to forgive others and oneself, to reframe life's events from a divine perspective, and to possess an inner sense that God has called one to this ministry offer an interpretive framework which also seems to contribute to heightened satisfaction.

Family Life

Descriptive statistics for family life satisfaction (FL-I) will be reported, followed by a presentation of adolescent children's perceptions of participants' family closeness and MK's satisfaction with their

Table 1
Correlation of Spiritual Life, Family Life, Ministry, and Status Satisfaction (N = 245)

Satisfaction	Satisfaction dimensions			
	Spiritual life	Family life	Ministry	Status
Spiritual life	—			
Family life	.47*	—		
Ministry	.32*	.26*	—	
Status	.39*	.35*	.65*	—

**p* < .0001.

Table 2
Spiritual Life Factors Correlated With Satisfaction Dimensions

Spiritual life factors	Satisfaction dimensions			
	Spiritual life	Family life	Ministry	Status
Disciplines				
Family devotions	.15	.31*	.02	.16
Personal devotions	.41*	.20	.21	.24*
Prayer	.31*	.22	.03	.08
Scripture	.32*	.22	.13	.17
Solitude	.24*	.10	.04	.08
Relationships				
Confidant	.29*	.23*	.22*	.17
Pastor/spiritual friend	.23*	.13	.29*	.21
Prayer partner	.19	.15	.17	.14
Spouse	.33*	.43*	.22	.27*
Intervening				
Attribution	.24*	.31*	.22*	.25*
Forgiveness	.28*	.32*	.13	.16
Vocational call	.33*	.31*	.32*	.44*

**p* < .002.

Table 3

MK-Adolescent Perceptions of Family Dynamics Correlated with Family Satisfaction (N = 127)

Family dynamics	MK Family Satisfaction (FL-S)		
	Cohesion	Adaptability	Total
Missionary kid satisfaction	.34*	.33*	.37*
Family closeness	.47*	.47*	.51*
Mother closeness	.54*	.51*	.55*
Father closeness	.45*	.39*	.45*
Family life satisfaction (FL-I)	.64*	.41*	.40*
School experience	.36*	.41*	.40*

* $p < .0001$.

families. Then correlations between FL-I and (a) spiritual life factors (disciplines, supporting relationships, and intervening factors), (b) spousal dynamics (ENRICH), (c) family-of-origin image (FOI), and (d) parental kindness will be reported. Again, Bonferoni corrections were applied to the correlations between FL-I and spiritual life factors and between FL-I and the ENRICH scales. Overall, participants registered high levels of satisfaction with their families ($M = 4.42$, $SD = .73$).

Adolescent MKs. Like their parents, MKs expressed highly positive feelings about their family dynamics. Emotional bonding between MKs and their families appeared strong (89.6%, *warm and close* or *somewhat close*), compared to a minority who seemed to feel more detached (10.4%, *casual*, *somewhat distant*, or *cold and distant*). These data were further supported by the fact that, knowing what they now know, 97% of MKs would still choose to be born an MK.

Adolescent family life satisfaction (FL-I, $M = 4.28$, $SD = .75$) corresponded closely to parental family life satisfaction ($M = 4.42$, $SD = .73$), with similar variability among respondents. Furthermore, adolescent family satisfaction (FL-S) correlated significantly and positively, in order of strength, with satisfaction as family life satisfaction (FL-I), mother closeness, family closeness, father closeness, feelings about one's school experience, and satisfaction as MKs (see Table 3). That is, the more positive MKs felt about the cohesion

and adaptability within their families, the more positive they tended to be about each of these five dimensions.

Spiritual life. Family life satisfaction (FL-I) correlated significantly and positively, in order of strength, with the spiritual life factors of spousal support, forgiveness, attribution, vocational call, and family devotions (see Table 2). In addition, FL-I correlated positively with spiritual life satisfaction (see Table 1). That is, the more satisfied a missionary was with his or her spiritual life, the more likely he or she was to be satisfied with family life, and vice versa. A synergistic relationship appears to exist between the quality of one's spiritual life and practices and family life satisfaction.

Spousal dynamics. Seven ENRICH scales correlated positively and significantly with FL-I (see Table 4). In rank order of strength, these are: marital satisfaction, sexual relationship, personality issues, communication, children and marriage, conflict resolution, and leisure activities. Predictably, marital dynamics are intricately bound up with family life satisfaction.

Family of origin. The majority of missionaries (68.2%) reported that it was easy to laugh and have fun together in their families of origin. In fact, 43.8% believed that not many other families were as happy with each other as they were. Family members found it difficult, however, to share personal feelings (55.5%), and just slightly more than one-third agreed that their family was a

Table 4
Spousal Relationship Correlated With Satisfaction Dimensions

Spousal dynamics	Satisfaction dimensions			
	Spiritual life	Family life	Ministry	Status
Children and marriage	.32*	.43*	.23	.22
Communication	.27*	.44*	.22	.22
Conflict resolution	.30*	.30*	.14	.19
Equalitarian roles	.002	-.003	.03	.03
Family and friends	.17	.18	.11	.15
Financial management	-.17	-.08	-.07	-.11
Leisure activities	.18	.28*	.06	.10
Marital satisfaction	.35*	.57*	.20	.27*
Personality issues	.26*	.45*	.12	.15
Sexual relationship	.36*	.50*	.14	.20

* $p < .002$.

Table 5
Correlates of Spousal Dynamics With Family-of-Origin Image

Spousal dynamics	Family of origin
Children and marriage	.14
Communication	.26*
Conflict resolution	.13
Equalitarian roles	.08
Family and friends	.26*
Financial management	-.13
Leisure activities	.16
Marital satisfaction	.25*
Personality issues	.14
Sexual relationship	.10

* $p < .002$.

Table 6

Missionary Perception of Parental Kindness and Absence in Family of Origin Correlated With Current Spousal Relationship (N = 235)

Spousal dynamics	Father		Mother	
	Kindness	Absence	Kindness	Absence
Children and marriage	.17*	-.10	.06	-.12
Communication	.21*	-.22*	.10	-.14*
Conflict resolution	.10	-.19*	.05	-.02
Equalitarian roles	.02	-.14*	.04	-.04
Family and friends	.24*	-.10	.15*	-.18*
Financial management	.09	.10	.09	.04
Leisure activities	.10	-.13	.03	-.12
Marital satisfaction	.21*	-.24*	.07	-.13
Personality issues	.07	-.20*	.04	-.08
Sexual relationship	.09	-.13	.03	-.03

* $p < .05$.

model Christian family (38.8%). Missionaries tend to have positive attitudes toward the way that their parents treated each other.

FOI correlated significantly and positively with three ENRICH factors: communication, family and friends, and marital satisfaction (see Table 5). Generally it may be concluded that the more favorably one views one's family of origin, the more comfortable one will be in sharing important emotions and beliefs with one's spouse, be comfortable with family and friend relationships, and feel compatible and satisfied with most aspects of one's marital relationship.

Father absence in the missionary's family of origin (see Table 6) correlated significantly and negatively with marital dynamics in the areas of marital satisfaction, communication, personality issues, conflict resolution, and equalitarian roles. Mother absence correlated significantly and negatively with friends and family and communication. By contrast, father kindness correlated significantly and positively with friends and family, communication, and marital satisfaction, and mother kindness with friends and family.

Ministry Satisfaction

Descriptive statistics for ministry role (MR-S) and missionary status (MS-S) satisfaction will be reported, followed by a presentation of correlations between SL-S and (a) spiritual life factors, (b) vocational call, and (c) mission support. Bonferroni corrections were applied to the correlations between MR-S and MS-S and spiritual life factors, and a .002 significance level was adopted.

Participants reported high ministry satisfaction ($M = 4.45$, $SD = .86$), as well as high missionary satisfaction ($M = 4.72$, $SD = .63$). Ministry satisfaction correlated positively and significantly with missionary satisfaction (Table 1).

Spiritual life. Both ministry (MR-S) and missionary (MS-S) satisfaction correlated significantly and positively with spiritual life satisfaction (see Table 1). Furthermore, MR-S correlated positively and significantly with spiritual life factors of supporting relationships (confidant and pastor/spiritual friend), as well as with intervening factors (attribution and vocational call). MS-S correlated positively and significantly with personal devo-

Table 7
Mission Support, Vocational Call, and Vocational Obedience Correlated With Satisfaction Dimensions

Satisfaction	Mission support	Vocational call	Vocational obedience
Family life	.18*	.30*	-.09
Ministry	.28*	.27*	.05
Missionary	.20*	.37*	.05
Spiritual life	.09	.32*	.07

* $p < .05$.

tions, spouse, attribution, and vocational call (see Table 2).

Vocational call. Missionaries agreed more strongly that “My missionary vocation is sustained by a God-given call” ($M = 4.32$, $SD = .84$) than that “It is more important to obey God in response to the Great Commission than to have a distinct sense of call to a missionary vocation” ($M = 3.34$, $SD = 1.22$). Vocational call, but not vocational obedience, correlated positively and significantly with family life, ministry, missionary, and spiritual life satisfaction (see Table 7). That is, the stronger one’s sense of being sustained by a God-given call, the higher one’s family life, ministry, missionary, and spiritual life satisfaction are likely to be.

Mission support. Family life, ministry, missionary, and spiritual life satisfaction were considered in the context of mission agency support for missionaries’ spiritual lives. Mission agency support correlated significantly and positively with ministry, missionary, and family satisfaction (see Table 7). Spiritual life intervening factors of forgiveness ($r = .30$, $p < .0001$) and vocational call ($r = .20$, $p < .002$) also correlated significantly with mission agency support. It seems that an optimum environment for ministry satisfaction is present when mission agency support for missionaries’ spiritual lives is coupled with a missionary’s sense of personal call to ministry lived out in the context of a forgiving community.

DISCUSSION

Missionaries in this study registered high levels of satisfaction with their family lives, vocational ministries, and spiritual lives. This study indicates that these three life domains interrelate in significant ways.

Family of Origin

Perceptions of relationships within a missionary’s family of origin were associated with marital communication, family and friends, and marital satisfaction. Perceived father kindness in particular was positively associated with marital satisfaction, communication, children and marriage, and friends and family. Father absence, by contrast, was negatively associated with marital satisfaction, personal issues, communication, conflict resolution, and egalitarian roles. Mother kindness and mother absence were less influential in current marital functioning than father kindness and father absence. It appears that emotional bonding with the father is particularly important to adult life and is consistent with other research findings (Andrews, 1995). As Lee and Bal-
swick (1989) pointed out, “If children are to learn anything about grace, they will learn it most deeply from their own mothers and fathers” (p. 167).

Because of increasing abuse and dysfunction experienced within families of origin by prospective missionaries, mission administrators should thoroughly explore such issues during the screening process and prior to appointment and deployment of new missionaries to their overseas assignments. The voices of our parents continue to speak into our lives long after we leave our childhood homes. The ability to discern and discriminate among these messages is critical to healthy functioning in almost all adult relationships. Personnel directors as a prerequisite to their appointments should be required to have assessment training which enables them to recognize and identify potential problems stemming from family-of-origin issues. Mission organizations, likewise, should have mechanisms in place for facilitating mis-

sionary candidates/appointees in processing family-of-origin issues, including referring when necessary to professionals who can work therapeutically with prospective missionaries. "Clearing the deck of excess baggage" carried around from one's family of origin releases an individual to relate more freely in his or her present relationships.

Vocational Call

A second area of importance to be considered during the "engagement period" between the mission agency and prospective missionary is that of one's motivation to be a missionary. Missionaries in this study believed strongly that their missionary vocation was sustained by a God-given call. They believed less strongly that it is more important to obey God in response to the Great Commission than to have a distinct sense of call to a missionary vocation. Vocational call correlated positively with family life satisfaction, ministry satisfaction, missionary status satisfaction, and spiritual life satisfaction. By contrast, vocational obedience did not correlate significantly with any of these four dimensions of satisfaction. Is it possible that obedience might be viewed as the foundation upon which to build a divine-human relationship, but by itself the "relational house" is not finished?

Perhaps the relational intimacy existing within the Godhead underlies the distinction observed in this study between "God has called me" and "God has commanded me." Both may be crucial. Certainly both are important, but the former suggests greater relational intimacy.

Jesus radically altered the nature of his relationship to his disciples when he said, "I no longer call you servants Instead, I have called you friends" (John 15:15, New International Version). By this straightforward assertion, Jesus invited his disciples into an intimate relationship characterized by grace-filled living and loving service. Moving from duty-oriented service to loving devotion springs from such relationship and leads to a sense of "Christ's love compelling us" (2 Cor. 5:14) even as it did the apostle Paul to persuade others to become Christ-persons. It also seems to support heightened levels of satisfaction in other dimensions of life. Mission leaders must first model lives of loving devotion and then coach and encourage and guide their member missionaries to emulate them and embrace a similar life of loving devotion to Christ.

Spousal Relationship

The spousal relationship is the most intimate of human relationships. God chose to establish Adam and Eve as the first community of husband and wife. As such he established the priority of this relationship over all others. The well-being of the spousal relationship, therefore, is central to the well-being of parents and children and, at its best, models God's ideal for the church.

Data from this study demonstrate a clear relationship among spousal satisfaction, family satisfaction, and spiritual life satisfaction. That is, a direct and positive correlation exists among these three elements. The higher a missionary's satisfaction with his or her spouse, the higher is his or her satisfaction in other domains. Furthermore, one's perception of his or her family of origin relates directly to the quality of the spousal relationship.

In view of the importance of the spousal relationship to overall satisfaction (and ultimately effectiveness as a missionary), mission agency leaders would do well to explore with prospective candidates questions related to the quality of their spousal relationship. They might further review periodically their organizational policies for potential impact upon couples. As one example, a policy that requires husbands and wives to be away from each other for extended times may contribute to weakening the spousal bond. Throughout the duration of the couple's tenure as missionaries, mission agency leaders should foster ways for couples to nurture their relationship. Perception may be more important than any specific thing a mission agency does, so insuring that missionaries within the organization believe that the mission agency cares about them and their marriage is essential.

Ministry

Intentional matching of gifts and graces of missionaries to ministry assignments is one way in which the mission agency can demonstrate its commitment to the well-being and satisfaction of its member missionaries. In so doing, missionaries may be more effective in their commitment to fulfill the Great Commission. If missions give up trying to fill slots for which there are no people, and people are used in ways consistent with gifting, may the overall cause of missions be advanced?

Spiritual Life

Practice of spiritual disciplines was positively associated with family life and ministry satisfaction. Relationship with the triune God is personal in nature. It involves wholehearted assent to the claims of Christ as expressed in Scripture. Such assent manifests itself in freely given obedience and loving devotion to Jesus Christ, God's Son. Furthermore, one's earliest impressions of God are formed in the context of family relationships.

Second, practicing the spiritual disciplines cultivates and sustains relationship with God. Spiritual disciplines do not guarantee a life-giving relationship. They do, however, open the channels through which God's grace can flow to his children. Each discipline is an act of bowing to the sovereignty of God as persons both listen to and speak with God.

Third, Christian faith develops within communities of faith. The essence of the Godhead is understood in part through the doctrine of the Trinity. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit live in relationship with one another. Humans reflect the image of God, in large part, when they live in harmonious relationship with one another. Communal living is expressed first and foremost in family life.

We tend to revert to our family-of-origin dynamics during times of crises and trauma. In the context of overlapping communities, however, those earlier dynamics may be reinforced and/or modified to reflect optimum levels of well-being in personal and interpersonal functioning. Presumably such expressions of community as the spousal relationship, relationships with children, friends, and mission agency all contribute potentially to heightened spiritual life satisfaction.

Each day following his creative activity, God looked at what he had done and said, "It is good," with one exception. After delegating oversight of the Garden of Eden to Adam, God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him" (Gen. 2:18). And following that observation God established the first social unit. We reflect the image of God, in part at least, by the way in which we relate to other persons, beginning with our families of origin and extending to our spouses, children, friends, churches, and others within our multiple networks of influence. Life in isolation is incompatible with God's design for our well-being.

A corollary of this is that our spiritual lives are nurtured and sustained within community.

One may conclude, therefore, that in most instances practice of the spiritual disciplines will be positively associated with various dimensions of personal satisfaction. Though practice of the disciplines does not produce satisfaction, it does position an individual in a posture of openness to receive God's life-giving grace as it freely flows toward the person. That grace in turn manifests itself in more wholesome family relationships and enhanced ministry satisfaction.

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