

The First Year on the Mission Field

1. The Legal Stuff: Paperwork, make sure it is all in order. Keep it up to date. Visas, passports, residencies, driver's licenses are integral parts of living in a foreign country. Mess one of these up and you will find that dealing with the authorities of a country you are not accustomed to could end up being a miserable and humiliating experience.
2. Learn the laws of the country you are in. Examples: What side of the road do they drive on? Can you freely participate in open air preaching or do you need a permit? What is the legal way to change money, like changing dollars to colones in Costa Rica or dollars to pesos in Mexico? How do you pay rent? How do you pay your utilities? How does one deal with local police when they confront you about something? Can you hand out tracts or Bibles?
3. Spend your first year absorbing the culture, learning the language, establishing relationships with local Christians and non-Christians, and generally doing all you can to being accepted in the country. Doing things the locals way is much more effective than promoting what you might perceive are the superior ways of your own culture and country.
4. Transportation: What are you going to use to get around, a car, a motorcycle, a bus, a train, a subway, a plane, a boat? The locale you are in, and your financial situation will play a part in determining how you get around. A lot of walking will be a part of the missionary experience especially during your first year.
5. Difficulties you will encounter your first year (and possibly many years onward into your missionary ministry.) Financial difficulties: Guard your heart against wrong attitudes toward your supporters. Homesickness: Why don't people write, call, or text me? Grandparent pressures: You have taken easy access to their grandchildren away from them. Remember how good it was back in (your home country)? Israel wanted to go back to Egypt. Marital changes: Surprisingly, this will be the hardest thing for children to handle.
6. If you don't have a vision, it will begin to formulate in you. Being away from your own country and being immersed in another culture, does wonders for opening your spiritual eyes to the needs of the locals. The Lord God will place the work in your heart that he wants you to do. If your first year on the mission field was language school, perhaps you can go back to your home country and home church for a month to refresh your vision in the people who will be praying for you and supporting you in the years ahead.
7. It may take up to 2 and a half years to get into a consistent flow in your ministry on the foreign field so spend time in getting established in a local church there, unless you are attempting to start the first church in an unreached area. There are plenty of those still around the world. Support from local believers is a very valuable asset for the missionary. They can help you with the language, the culture, and understanding the spiritual condition of the people around them.
8. One of the hardest things you will face is maintaining your own spiritual walk with the Lord. Stay in prayer and in fellowship with God. Your ministry to God is to be a priority. Know when to say yes and no to the needs of your ministry on the mission field so that you will not lose your intimacy with Him. Without the Lord guiding you there will be no power in your ministry.
9. Although it is your first year and you have much to learn, **don't be afraid to place a demand on God's power**. When ministry opportunities present themselves during this time of adjustment far away from home allow your faith to be stretched and believe the Lord God to use you for great and mighty things for his kingdom. Don't use canned sermons, instead allow the Holy Spirit to drop fresh words of life into your heart to be presented to the people.

God bless you and keep you in this wonderful calling to reach another people group for Christ!