
The book held my interest and I gained a much better understanding of issues related to the training of short-termers by reading How to get ready for short-term missions: The ultimate guide for sponsors, parents and those who go! This is a book that is worth having and is a must read for those who will soon venture on a mission trip. It expands on what other books on preparation and training for short-term mission have presented. (This book would be an excellent companion to David A. Livermore’s book Serving with eyes wide open: Doing short-term missions with cultural intelligence see book review in JAMS 2, no. 1:112-113).

The authors have had extensive experience in missions. Anne-Geri’ Fann works primarily in Honduras where she has coordinated youth camps and short-term mission teams for almost twenty years. Her missionary experience extends from her birthplace in New Zealand to other places throughout the world. Greg Taylor planted churches for seven years in Uganda with his wife and three children. He has traveled considerably, is the author of several books, is the managing editor of New Wineskins Magazine, and is an associate minister for the Garnett Church of Christ in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

The book starts with four images of mission instilled in the author’s (Anne-Geri’) heart by her missionary father. These images are central to the content and purpose of the book and are found in the dedication. This personal touch creates credibility in the book and connects the reader with the authors in a very personal and missionary way.

How to get ready for short-term missions helps the reader pack the suitcase and prepare the heart, build genuine relationships with local people, understand cultural differences, deal with physical fatigue, and combat stretched emotions. As a training manual on short-term mission this book also aims at directing and guiding short-termers on topics like culture, flexibility, what you do and do not have to offer, the biblical basis for mission work, relationships
on the field, and ways to discover and use your gifts on the trip. The book presents excellent case studies and stories that make its content relevant and easy to understand and relate to.

The book is divided into eight chapters, with each chapter beginning with a real-life story called a missionary moment to set the context for the subject and to also stimulate discussion. At the close of each chapter an activity is given that is designed to help short-termers imagine what it would be like for them to be missionaries.

*How to get ready for short-term missions* is intended mostly for people engaging in short-term mission trips, nevertheless it would benefit any career missionary serving in a cross-cultural context, especially those whose responsibilities relate to receiving and coordinating short-term missionaries.

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The challenge of contextualizing the presentation of the gospel so it can be understood and accepted while struggling against syncretism which dilutes the gospel through accommodating non-Christian thought and practice produces constant tension in evangelical missions. Dr. Van Rheenen has compiled this book from presentations and articles by evangelical missiologists who grapple with the two sides of this tension both theoretically and through case studies of actual mission practices. The book’s purpose is to strengthen Evangelical missions by encouraging those involved with the mission of the church to ask “to what degree” are the current practices of contextualization actually “syncretistic.” The editor’s belief is that the post-modern church will, if it is not exceedingly careful, tend toward a culture-accommodating contextualization that will produce syncretism.

The first two sections of the book are composed of articles that deal with theoretical and theological issues of contextualization and syncretism. Van Rheenen begins with a discussion of these issues through definitions and examples of syncretism among God’s people, both in ancient Israel and in the modern church. He suggests that syncretism is the natural tendency in all eras of the church as it tries to exist in the cultures of its time. Possibly the most relevant article in this section for today’s missionaries is the one by David Hesselgrave,