

**Turney Russ, *Leave a Legacy: Increasing Missionary Longevity*, APTS Press, Philippines, 2013. 135 pp. \$15.00USD**

Russ Turney's book *Leave a Legacy: Increasing Missionary Longevity* shows that from 1986 - 2005 about thirty-seven percent of Assemblies of God Asia Pacific Region missionaries resigned. The top six reasons were: financial difficulties, health challenges, personal reasons, family-related issues, U.S. based ministry transfers and relationship problems (p. 96). Turney uses his findings to focus not on the past but the future. In the preface, Turney asks a probing question, "What lessons could be learned from past mistakes that would help new personnel adjust better, serve longer, and be more effective in missions?"

Greg Mundis the Executive Director of the Assemblies of God World Missions, USA gives Russ Turney and this book a high commendation. He points out that the author, an experienced missionary, is able to show from both biblical and practical approaches how to help missionaries remain in missions long term. Indeed, Russ Turney and his wife Patsy, have been Assemblies of God World Missionaries (AGWM USA) since 1983. They first served in the Philippines for fourteen years and as Area Directors for Southeast Asia for eight of those years.

The book's eight chapters begin with a statement of the reasons for attrition among the Asia Pacific missionaries leaving their careers. He was looking for the "factors that negatively affect missionary longevity and increase attrition" (p. 11). In Chapter two, Turney's literature review, he surveys main contributions to this topic such as Frank Allen's *Why Do They Leave? Reflection on Attrition* and the major study on missionary attrition by William D. Taylor entitled *Too Valuable to Lose*. He then begins to crystalize his thoughts as he lists the Challenges to Longevity: Interpersonal Conflict and Spiritual Factors that Impact Missionary Longevity. After describing his research methodology in Chapter five and his research results in Chapter six and seven, he concludes by suggesting a strategy for missionary career longevity in his final chapter.

Turney's literature review in Chapter two is quite comprehensive, listing top reasons for attrition and longevity. From Craig Storti's *The Art of Crossing Cultures*, Turney finds that failure to cope with stress causes missionaries to leave and that there at least seven ways missionaries could cope with those stresses. Missionaries should anticipate stressors; they should keep their cool by taking the

stress in stride; know that it is not all that bad; be as positive as possible; do activities that will help them cope such as exercise and sleep; make sure they are in contact with their support people; and make new friendships in the new culture.

In Chapter three Turney recognizes the organizational factors that affect missionary longevity and attrition. He cites William David Taylor who identifies eight principles that help missionaries remain in service from pages 42-45. The principles are: spirituality which refer to faith in God; relational skills as they interact with others; ministry skills that are learned and experienced; training which is continuing education or life-long learning; church involvement with a local church as a base; on-field care or member care; evaluation or assessment to encourage growth; and closure for a proper and positive leaving from the field. Another important factor is mentoring or the biblical term, discipling. Turney states, "The Asia Pacific Region has encouraged a mentoring relationship between new personnel and selected veterans who have demonstrated a positive outlook and have worked well with fellow missionaries and national leaders" (p. 58).

Missionaries will face conflicts. The acid test is how they handle these situations. In Chapter four Turney tackles this sticky topic. He put his finger on the pulse: that is, how conflict is handled is related to spirituality. The missionary's role is that of a peace-maker and not a war-creator. Within this chapter, Turney gives biblical models of longevity from both the Old Testament and New Testament and points to the biblical emphasis on finishing well.

Chapter five is a short one is a succinct description of how he conducted his research project. His perimeters are clear. The time period is 1986-2005. He sent questionnaires to veteran missionaries and garnered information from archives of missionary records, although in doing so found information gaps which he mentioned toward the end of the book.

For the untrained, the reporting of the results in Chapter six may be a little difficult to understand. After a while the reader may get lost in the tables, graphs and charts. It is also confusing why the results from the veteran missionaries were reported in a separate chapter, since these results should have been integrated together.

The most important of Turney's discoveries are found on pages 110, 111, 121 and 122, as to the "reasons why missionaries stayed." The most significant of reasons "were personal piety and a sense of God's call to missions." This information gave Turney the fuel to suggest that training sessions for new and veteran missionaries must

include an emphasis on these areas of their lives. He further conceptualizes the practical application of these to be focused on family issues, a heavy reliance on the Holy Spirit, financial management for personal and corporate stability, as well as being able to adapt to life and ministry in another country. The goal of is so that the missionaries will finish well.

My main disappointments are that since this is a study of Assemblies of God World Missionaries of the Asia Pacific region, I am missing a more intentional emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit in promoting longevity in missionary service. Another lack I find in Turney's book is reflection on the uniqueness of the context of the Asia Pacific, which may also add positively or negatively to missionary career longevity.

All in all Russ Turney has done significant research that can help in a practical way, mission endeavours of the Assemblies of God USA in the Asia Pacific region. This is a book that all missionaries must pick up before and during their missionary careers. It can be a great guide and inspiration to keep on keeping on for the Lord!

by Teresa Chai, Ph.D