

mission matters

missionmatters, published every year by Christian Vocations, contains details of current opportunities throughout the world. It includes a number of vacancies with mission organisations that actually send people as tentmakers. Every entry is indexed by type of work and location, making it easy to find the information that you want. It also contains valuable insights and testimonies of others similarly engaged in working as Christians overseas.

Contact Christian Vocations for copies of **missionmatters** or for more information about tentmaking opportunities.

Further copies of Guideline leaflets can be obtained from Christian Vocations online and at the address below.

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tentmakers

sharing the gospel
through secular
work overseas

The call of Jesus to His first disciples in Galilee required them to leave their nets and livelihood behind. They were to learn His provision while devoting themselves to discipleship and ministry. Peter followed this pattern during his later missionary career, but Paul favoured a modified approach of plying a trade on some of his missionary journeys. This trade of tentmaking (Acts 18:3) not only relieved the infant church of financially supporting Paul but also gave him the opportunity to model Christian integrity and lifestyle in the workplace.

A tentmaker is a Christian called by God to cross-cultural ministry through their secular vocation. Tentmakers today are teachers, administrators, bankers, engineers, architects, students, or physiotherapists - to name just a few.

releasing God's people into God's work



why use tentmakers?

There are more opportunities than ever for properly trained Christians in overseas jobs where they can communicate Christ and practise Christian ethics. There is an increasing need in the developing world for people with expertise in technology, education, and other fields. And all ages can be involved. In fact, those who are over 50 may be in the particularly exciting position of having time on their hands and much valuable experience to share with others overseas. Christians in secular careers do not have to overcome some of the barriers faced by conventional missionaries. They have a natural point of contact with the community because their positions allow them to meet people of different professional and social classes. There are many situations where full-time missionaries fail to gain acceptance among people while secular workers who also "happen" to be Christians are welcome. Furthermore, a large number of countries now restrict Christian work in some way. Therefore, tentmaking is often the only way in which the Gospel can be spread in such places.

how does it work?

Self-support is an advantage because a tentmaker isn't paid by the church or a Christian organisation. This allows the worker to have independent credibility. But self-support is not essential, and those on local salaries often have to be supplemented by payments from their churches and elsewhere. However, more important than the issue of support is that:

1. God has called you to use your gifts and skills in a cross-cultural situation and that you are sufficiently qualified and experienced. You will need spiritual and practical preparation to be effective in tentmaking. If you are going with an agency, they will be involved in your training. You may want to spend time on a Bible college course looking at mission issues in depth.

2. You take the opportunity to share the Gospel sensitively and with integrity. The work itself is a means of testimony and, depending on the circumstances, may be the only way. You need to be spiritually ready and motivated to answer questions and explain your faith as opportunities arise.

3. You are recognised and commended by your home church. You need to explain your vision carefully so that your church can see the importance of your work overseas and affirm you in it. You may also want to be linked with a mission agency that can encourage you through the difficult times, provide some accountability and help you establish a local support network.

4. You have good physical and psychological health to cope with culture stress and perhaps isolation and loneliness.

5. You have a good relationship with God and a sustained prayer life.

what's the balance?

Tentmakers have responsibilities towards their employers, and work commitments will limit the time that can be spent actively sharing the Gospel and learning the language. Check out the details of your position before you go, and have realistic expectations of what you hope to achieve. Remember that just one person who is saved and effectively disciplined as a result of your witness can go on to share the Gospel with others who otherwise may never hear it.

where do I start?

You should start to plan a strategy for preparation.

- Why not begin by looking in the newspapers and professional journals for the right sort of jobs? See what countries they are working in.
- Find out about those countries and the strategic opportunities that you might find there for being a Christian witness.
- Check out the resources and pages on CV's website on 'tentmaking' issues ... maybe contact some 'tentmakers' to gain a better understanding and real perspective.
- Talk to mission agencies and businesses that work in that part of the world and to people who have been there. Build up a file. Pray about the responses that you get.
- Talk it through with someone in your fellowship whose judgement you trust.
- Lay out your ideas to God. Let Him show you step by step what He wants you to do.