

In view of the serious shortage of missionary workers in Europe, the task at hand is to mobilize more people to join us as long term missionaries. The conventional approach has been to urge some workers from other mission fields to switch to Europe, and to recruit others from existing church ministries. But we are not going to gather a big enough missionary force if we only bring people in from other parts of the world. We need to train a significant number of missionaries right here in Europe.

From our mission field today, a new generation is rising up to follow the footsteps of those who led them to Christ. We are finding more and more young people who sincerely want to offer their lives to be a part of God's greater plan. They are passionate about seeking God's will and bringing the gospel to the lost. We have the exciting opportunity to train them to become the next generation of missionaries.

So often when we hear that someone is considering full time ministry, the first thing we do is to encourage him or her to study at a theological seminary. However, missionary training and preparation are much more than just to give people a theological education, especially when they are also very young in their natural and spiritual life. While there will always be a need for formal theological and Biblical training, it is time we rethink our strategy in missionary training so that our young people can be more fully prepared for the ministry of the gospel in the challenging mission field.

It is easy to let the pressing needs of the mission field undermine the importance of adequate preparation of future missionaries. For those young in Christ, we need to be especially careful not to get them overly involved in missionary work in a great hurry. We should encourage them to learn their first lessons in the school of life, to build a personal relationship with God, and to enjoy serving the Lord in their local churches. Above all, we need to guide them to obey their Master in the small details of daily life. Remember those who have been proven faithful with a few things will be put in charge of many things later.

Young and locally trained missionary workers tend to face a common problem: the support behind them could be weak and unstable. They don't usually have a strong and well resourced church to be their sending church, and they are often the first to come to Christ among their peers, friends and families so it is not possible to rely on their personal networks for prayer and financial support. The attrition rate for these missionaries could potentially be very high.

What kind of help can we provide to sustain this new generation of missionaries? We can help them to connect to other comrades who journey in the same direction with them, and we can help them to seek advice, wisdom and guidance from those who have marched down the path before them. We can also help them to strengthen their support base. Mission minded churches, groups, and individual can adopt a missionary through caring communication, financial support, and prayer.

It is our hope to raise a new generation of missionary workers who can stand on the shoulders of those who have gone before, to break new grounds and advance God's kingdom in frontier mission. We need to devote valuable time to dialogue, brainstorm, connect, and strategize with different mission partners. Please pray that God will bring the right ideas to us as we pursue His plans and purposes in the next generation.

Rev Henry Lu