

## 2021 M3 Conference Questions & Answers

*The following are a compilation of the most frequently asked and applicable questions from attendees and the answers from the speakers during the 2021 M3 Conference. Our hope is that the questions and answers help you find your mission and apply your talents and skills in service to those in need. Most organizations mentioned can be found on the Exhibitor webpage at: <https://m3missions.com/partners/exhibitors/>.*

### **Who is needed on the mission field?**

There is something for everyone in missions. Everyone has a gift and God will use it for His work. Anesthesiologists, general doctors, doctors in every specialty, nurses in every specialty, teachers in all fields, lawyers, IT, mechanics, plumbers, accountants, pastors, lay people, shelter, food distribution, sanitation, administration, the list is endless. In short, all occupations that exist are needed, and to make it even clearer, if you exist, you are needed. (We highly suggest reviewing the mission organizations on the Exhibitor webpage at: <https://m3missions.com/partners/exhibitors/> to find an organization who would greatly appreciate your service.)

### **How did you know when to move to the next task and mission in life? How do you handle such situations?**

I think God speaks to us in a couple of ways. I think sometimes He makes us uncomfortable, restless, wanting to do something different. Sometimes He closes doors and then He opens doors. He gives us visions of new opportunities for different kinds of endeavors. And, I have found that when I pay attention to these things and I listen, I come to understand that it's time to do something different; then, He always provides a place and all I have to do is trust in Him and walk through that door.

### **How do you decide where you are going to serve?**

Praying, listening, and investigating opportunities where there are needs. For us, we traveled to Tenwek Hospital in Kenya on an exploratory trip when I was a medical student. They needed an ophthalmologist, and we were willing to serve there.

### **How do you raise funds for short-term and long-term missions?**

There are many ways to raise funds for a mission trip. All of the different ways will fall into 3 main categories. The first way to fundraise is through a fundraising event, such as a dinner, bake sale, auction, 5K Walk/Run, sports event, partnering to sell some type of retail item that shares the proceeds (i.e. candy, wreaths, hams, etc.), and the list goes on. The second way is to create a contest, such as a raffle where people buy a ticket to win a prize. The third way is to ask people directly - either online, writing a support letter, or in person. Writing support letters, although an old way to raise support, is very effective, and the most effective method is to schedule time to meet with people in person.

### **I'm a clinician or physician assistant and have not yet specialized. So, how can I find my niche since most hospitals are asking for specialized doctors?**

There is most definitely a need and role for generalists. It is true in some more advanced mission hospitals that specialists are increasingly important. But in more rural areas or in the poorest countries, a generalist is what is needed most. For physician assistants (PA), you need to check the individual country's classification. Some will register a PA as a clinical officer, which is a close equivalent to a physician assistant in African countries.

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### **What would you say to encourage students as they are trying to determine what to do with their life?**

First and foremost, they must know that God has created them as a masterpiece with their individual gifts, talents and bents. The biggest mistake I think we have made over the years with our young people who have gotten serious about their faith, is encouraging them to jump out of their business or medical major and jump into an intracultural studies major or a "mission" theology or seminary major. Yes, there is a benefit in these types of "mission" majors, but the reality is that if they want to go into the unreached parts of the world, they will need that medical or other professional-skilled major to gain access. This is where leaning into who God has made them to be is so important, so they know if He's calling them to a theology degree or that medical degree. Put their efforts into the dreams and desires that God has placed in their heart and be who God has made them to be. That would really be one of the biggest encouragements that I would give to students. Find out how God has made them and continue to explore that and then select a major that would allow them to express how they are uniquely SHAPED (please watch Andrew Scott's 2021 M3 Breakout Session video for details). And, if they want to go to the unreached parts of the world, it's most likely going to be in the context of some of these majors (medical, business, etc.) and not the traditional, historical "mission" majors.

### **What would you say to encourage students to keep pushing through school to then be able to serve?**

I struggled with all the studying and reading, etc. required to complete medical school. But, I realized that for that season of my life, God was calling me to study and learn as much as possible to serve Him later. It is a difficult season, but remember that it is just that...a season. God preparing us for His plan. Also, keep the flame of missions alive in your heart by attending events like the M3 Conference and possibly take short-term trips to keep your vision alive to pursue your long-term goal.

### **Where can an entry level or a new entrant fit after finishing a bachelor's degree in public health?**

Individuals with a bachelor's degree in public health can often begin with a position in community development. For advanced responsibilities, a master's degree in public health would likely be required.

### **I have a degree in health or business administration, are my skills useful on the mission field?**

We need administrators! Someone has to manage the logistics, the transportation, visas, travel, financing and hiring. Mission ministries do not exist without those kinds of logistics. So, someone who is formally trained in administration can be a wonderful compliment. As mission hospitals or mission organizations grow in providing medicine, education and/or other services, they tend to lag behind in growing the business side. A great need exists for skilled healthcare administrators. If you still feel like you need more training, as a start, I recommend an Institute for International Medicine (INMED) professional certificate in international public health. This will give you a solid orientation to the challenges and logistics of the field. INMED, or another quality organization, can also arrange for mentored service experiences where you can gain some skills in this field before launching out on your own. However, you are needed just as you are, your skills will be a tremendous blessing without additional training.

### **Is there anything a therapist can do?**

If you are referring to physical therapy or occupational therapy, yes! The problems with disabilities in the developing world are profound and therapists can create hope among these individuals and families. If you are referring to psychological therapy, yes there is also a need for such professionals. But to be effective, they would also need to become very familiar with the culture and languages of the community.

### **What are the steps to take to start serving in a medical facility or orphanage in a war-torn nation such as Afghanistan?**

Begin by looking for organizations that already have a medical facility or orphanage in such a location, so they can guide you with the intricacies. Just by definition, that kind of service is going to be unpredictable. You need to have an organization that is experienced with that kind of unpredictability. Often, they will be blessed by your willingness to contribute to their work. If no ministry exists in the area where you desire to serve, then begin by interviewing those in power, such as government officials or medical care establishments, and seek their cooperation in beginning such a work.

### **How does one partner with an existing medical clinic in the developing world to provide resources and sustainability to surrounding villages instead of creating something new?**

This is one of the things that I believe in because I think a lot of people feel like when they go somewhere they have to start something new. A lot of times if you will look around, you'll find that there are people working and already doing the work you are interested in. Some of those people are lacking resources, some people are lacking additional manpower because the work is plenty, but the workers are very few. When you go to a new place, I do think that is very important to figure out what are the things that are already in place and who can you come alongside. Sometimes, there is a notion that people think that the reason why countries in Africa, like Malawi, are behind is because there are no people there who have the capacity to change the course of their country. The truth of the matter is that there are a lot of people like myself, my sisters, my brother who are fully capable of being able to have the ideas that can actually change the course of how our country runs. I think coming alongside existing organizations and clinics is very helpful to the organization. So, when you come to a conference like this or a place, one of the biggest things you can get out of it is to take a look around and see what groups are doing the work in your area of interest, doing the work in the countries you would like to serve in, and then start out by joining one of those organizations that is already doing the work. Usually, that's how you figure out where you belong. I definitely agree that starting something new isn't always the way to go unless there are not any other resources available.

### **How should a medical student/doctor prepare for missionary surgery or cardiothoracic care prior to going abroad?**

First and foremost, prepare your heart. Keep the flame of missions alive in your heart by attending things like the M3 Conference and possibly take short-term trips to keep your vision alive in pursuing your long-term goal. To prepare for cardiothoracic work in Africa, you of course need to complete cardiothoracic training. There are a few programs that are beginning to look into overseas options for trainees. The Medical College of Wisconsin in Milwaukee will start sending fellows next year (2022). Their team has many Christians on board and might be a great fit. If you are currently in cardiothoracic training in a country that doesn't have significant cases of Rheumatic Heart Disease, look into the option of going to Tenwek Hospital in Kenya for a month elective. You can learn more about pursuing opportunities at Tenwek Hospital by connecting with World Medical Mission at: <https://www.samaritanspurse.org/medical/world-medical-mission/>

### **What specific training did you have to serve as a disaster relief nurse?**

I have been a RN for 24 years. Samaritan's Purse provides DART training and different training opportunities, but most of my training has come through my 11 years of experience on the ground in many different disaster settings. I also study and read a lot when I'm home about tropical illness, field-wilderness medicine, and many other things I encounter when deployed. That helps me stay up on things and current.



**In disaster relief, volunteers and workers are needed from every skill set, not just medical. Can you tell us other jobs, skills and trades that are needed in disaster relief?**

I can speak for Samaritan's Purse (SP) where we have all kinds of needs, water and sanitation, shelter, food distribution, engineers, logistics, finance and hospitality.

**Based on your experience with serving in missions, how would you suggest that a single mother pursue missions work?**

Every person has the same purpose, but our roles will be different. Our SHAPE (please watch Andrew Scott's 2021 M3 Breakout Session video for details) determines our role; part of our SHAPE is from experience. Right now, your experience is that you are a single mother, and with that comes some wonderful opportunities to speak into the lives of others in a similar situation - speaking hope, love, peace, joy etc. Also, with that will come some limitations (true for all of us); for example, you may not be able to relocate or travel. But, here where you currently live, you have neighbors, other single moms, married moms, and friends of your kids in your circle of influence. Mission is to be carried out in all of life, in the everyday of life, among those you touch in life. It is not first and foremost about a location, other than the one you are currently in. It's more about where God has you placed...what can you be doing where you are placed with the SHAPE you have been given.

**I was wondering how we can develop the skill of being a good storyteller and being able to relate with those in different cultures to share Christ with them?**

I would look up "Storying," "Bible Storying," and/or "Disciple Making Bible Storying" online. The power of God's Word through Bible stories, without embellishing them, draws people to Jesus.

**As a disaster relief nurse, did you feel safe in Iraq?**

Yes, I did feel safe. We take security very seriously at Samaritan's Purse, and I'm sure other organizations do as well. We knew that being on the front lines during a war would be exceptionally challenging, but I really did feel safe. We needed to be there as there was a lot to do, and we saw a lot of patients. You just have to hone in and focus on what God has called you to do and trust Him with the consequences. I trusted God that He called me to go, so I also trusted Him with the outcome.

**I was so encouraged to hear that you are a wife and mom, as well as a missionary nurse! How does your work impact your family? How do you and your husband address preparing your children for your travels and including them in your work?**

It's very important that our family get the best of us, not the scraps. So, I engage with them deeply and often when I am home so I can "fill their bank accounts" so to speak. That way, when I'm away on a deployment, they have reserves left over and don't feel that they are not important to me. We talk a lot about my work, and I always ask them how they feel about my leaving each time. I cast the vision often for the work of Christ and that serving God demands sacrifice and a cost. They are very supportive and understand the bigger picture of going out into the world to share Christ during crisis situations. I come home and share stories about how I see God working in the world, and how God used our DART team to serve others and bring encouragement and tangible help. That helps them to see the bigger picture. We text, email or FaceTime the best we can while I'm away to stay connected. I try to always be available to them when I'm home and when I'm away.

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### **Since you are married, how do you serve in missions and maintain a healthy marriage?**

Jesus told us to, 'Go make disciples...teaching them everything I have taught you...' Two things from this:

1) Making disciples was about 'all of life,' not just about a Bible study and a set of personal 'spiritual disciplines'. So, for the discipler, they needed to model Christ in every aspect of doing life, including their marriage. A disciple should be able to see from the example of the one who disciplines them what following Jesus looks like in marriage. Therefore, having a healthy marriage was not simply something you should pay attention to so you could stay in mission, it became critical to the mission in that it was one of the primary relationships through which to model following Jesus.

2) Jesus taught about marriage, so that means it is also part of what we need to teach. If teaching about it is important, then it should be a high priority to us to ensure we practice what we teach. Finally, I would say that when we can see mission as not simply the idea of preaching a message to change the eternal destination of someone's soul, but the very living out of that message. Living out the ways of the King (at all times) shows others His goodness, His love, His compassion, His grace, His patience, His Kindness (the list goes on) through our lives and marriage. Since marriage is a wonderful picture of that, it should be prioritized as such.

### **How do you deal with burnout?**

There are times this is a struggle, with very long hours, long deployments and challenging work or situations. I pray a lot and ask God to equip me to handle the situations. He always does. I try to remember why I'm there and that those we are called to serve need an all-in nurse/healthcare provider who does not feel burned out or compassion fatigued, they deserve the best care and love. In those moments when you struggle, it's best to ask Christ to fill you with what you need and help you through it. When we are weak, He is strong.

### **How do you handle re-entry?**

Re-entry is really challenging, especially during the pandemic this past year. I've deployed three times this past year. Usually, before the pandemic, I leave the comfort of my home, go to a disaster, live there in a disaster for 4-5 weeks, and then I come home to the comfort of my home. Well, over the last year, I left a disaster, to go to a disaster, and came home to a disaster. So, that's been challenging for me this year, for sure. I handle re-entry by just pulling away and taking time for myself and my family, to get to know my family again, since I've been gone. I spend a lot time with God processing because you don't get a lot of time to process on the field, so you need to process once you get home, which involves reading my Bible, resting and just getting ready for the next deployment.

### **What is it like being a missionary in a non-Christian country? What is the biggest challenge and how do you overcome it?**

Every context is different. Each context has its challenges. What I have found and heard is that very often in a place where the principles of God's kingdom are not being lived out, it is much easier to stand out. Also, that as we stand out through acts of love, through a peaceful and joy-filled posture, then people are attracted to that. When we do good work and reflect God, people see the difference and are drawn in. For me, the key is that we need to be there in a way that allows us to be visible. That happens when our presence makes sense to the people we are living among and our role adds value and fits within the fabric of their society. In most cases, being a 'missionary' does not fit, but being a doctor, an engineer, an artist, a lawyer or a hairdresser does fit. Also, occupations provide a way to show love, bring good, be present, so they can see God through us. Though there are still challenges, those that are doing this are finding it relatively easy to have conversations about Jesus.



### **What is a degree in Public Health?**

A degree in public health is a field devoted to community development and disease prevention. For example, the COVID-19 pandemic has illustrated the responsibilities and role of public health leaders.