

Welcome to Explore

Are you considering cross-cultural service?

Do you think you might have a call to missions?

EXPLORE can help!

EXPLORE is a set of learning experiences designed for people who are exploring the possibility of cross-cultural service.

This is a life-long journey of growing in character, commitment, and competence. Let's get started!

The Explore series is written for people who are exploring the possibility of cross-cultural missionary service.

These materials were created with Southern Baptists in mind. If you are not a Southern Baptist, you will still find them helpful in your preparation for cross-cultural ministry. Please refer to your chosen church or denominational materials when you are pointed toward specifically SBC information.

Corella Ricketson, emeritus missionary and mentor to many, was the guiding force behind the creation of these materials in 2000. Her insights and experience training workers in Taiwan and the U.S. shaped the information presented as foundational to the missionary journey.

Sarah Haun, an emeritus missionary who served in West Africa, updated the materials in 2010.

Susan Atkinson, ICEL manager of instructional technology, created the instructional design and delivery for all versions.

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International Centre for Excellence in Leadership

International Mission Board, SBC

Rockville, VA

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EXPLORE was created for self-study. There are no lectures. We want you to experience as you explore, so you'll be asked to do some things you probably haven't done before. We hope you'll be brave and go for it.

Our style is dialogue learning, meaning you dialogue with the materials, with the culture, with your mentor, with your friends, with yourself, and above all with God.

The materials can be studied in a linear fashion or very organically. You choose what works for you. We've included some guidelines to help show the way.

Be sure you find a mentor. That's someone who will talk with you, pray with you, guide you to figure out what you're doing and where you're going. There's more info later.

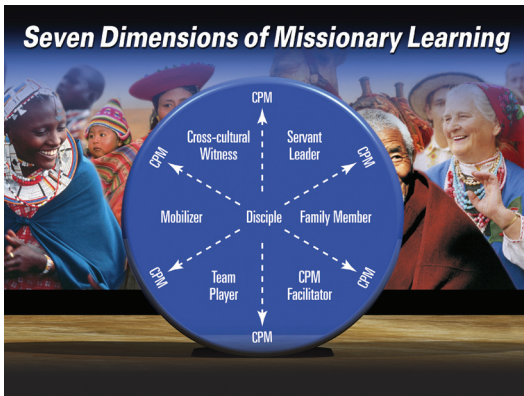
For now, turn the page and see what it's all about!

IMB divides this journey into Four Phases...

Each Phase reflects a milestone in your journey of lifelong learning.



...and Seven Dimensions.



You are in the Exploration Phase, and you will begin in the Disciple Dimension.

- **Exploration Phase** is a journey of discovery, discernment, and growth. This phase begins as you explore the possibility of a call to cross-cultural service.
- **Orientation Phase** is what happens once you are appointed to serve, when you participate in a field personnel orientation (FPO) with others who have been appointed for cross-cultural service. It builds on the knowledge and experience you have developed with a focus on your learning needs related to your cross-cultural assignment.
- **Entry Phase** is the initial training and orientation you receive upon arrival on the field. The knowledge and skills you gain during this phase increase your ability to translate the IMB vision into action and to function in your place of service. This phase includes language training and acclimation to life in another culture.
- **Leadership Phase** begins as you move into a role that allows you to significantly influence others. This phase continues throughout your cross-cultural career.

You are beginning a journey of learning that never ends—discovery, growth, and equipping.

Following you will find overall descriptions of each of the Seven Dimensions, broken down into the characteristics that describe the focus of the mature missionary's life and learning.

A description specific to the Exploration Phase is included in the introduction of each dimension's guide. These descriptions are the goals which form the knowledge base needed prior to orientation.

Although each phase and dimension seems to be distinct, they are part of the continuum of experience and skills that will combine to help bring the all peoples to faith in Christ.

Disciple

- You are a disciple of Christ. Your relationship and daily walk with Christ distinguishes you from the world.
- Holiness and purity define your lifestyle.
- Your prayer life is dynamic and vibrant.
- You are growing in biblical knowledge and understanding.
- You continue to mature in your personal devotions and find deep satisfaction in worshipping and serving God through the local church.
- You witness to the lost.
- You are a spiritual warrior.
- You practice good stewardship of time, money, resources and your physical and emotional health.

It is this dimension that gives validity to the other dimensions and worth to God's purpose for you.

Servant Leader

- You are a servant leader in Christ.
- The servant leadership of Jesus is your model as you constantly seek ways to serve others.
- You understand yourself, your spiritual gifts and your limitations.
- You have a personal and mission vision.
- You translate vision to action.
- You plan your life and work with purpose.
- You effectively influence and mentor others.
- You supervise and are supervised by others.
- You appreciate and support the IMB stewardship of finance and resources.

Team Player

- You serve on the IMB team and a field team.
- You understand the vital role of Spirit-led strategy and sound principles of biblical missiology.
- You relate to Great Commission teams, teams of Southern Baptists, and national partner churches.
- You communicate clearly and articulately through appropriate channels.
- You reflect a strong Southern Baptist identity.
- You build and maintain healthy relationships.
- You choose to be accountable to others.
- You are aware of and trained in contingency security matters.

Cross-Cultural Witness

- You understand God's plan as revealed in the Bible to bring all peoples to Him.
- You succeed at living cross-culturally; your lifestyle demonstrates a profound understanding of the culture.
- You are competent in the languages of the people groups with whom you live and work.
- You effectively contextualize the gospel and actively evangelize.
- You lead others to understand the reality of cross-cultural ministry.

Church Planting Movement Facilitator

- You are a cross-cultural church planter.
- You understand the concepts of people groups, population segments, and urban centers.
- You stimulate and nurture church planting movements among your people group.
- You model the New Testament pattern of discipleship
- You nurture potential cross-cultural workers.
- You understand and apply the NT characteristics of a church.
- You are skilled at equipping Southern Baptist partners and local believers to plant multiplying churches.

Mobilizer

- You are intentional about developing and maintaining prayer networks.
- You understand the central role of personalization in casting the vision for local church involvement in global missions.
- You skillfully and strategically involve SBC churches and constituencies in mission endeavors.
- You love the lost and advocate tirelessly for them.
- You communicate the needs of your people group so that others will join in the task of evangelization.

Family Member

- You acknowledge your role as family member and are committed to nurturing healthy family relationships.
- If single, you glorify God through your singleness in the context of a cross-cultural ministry calling.
- If you are a spouse, you glorify God through your marriage and home, seeking to serve and lead your family in a Christ-like way.

- If you are the parent of third culture children, you rejoice in this blessing and seek to provide a spiritually nourishing, affirming environment of love, guidance and acceptance.
- You are proactive to involve your entire family in cross-cultural ministry.
- You seek to meet your child’s educational needs.
- You deal with extended family issues in a way that reflects both your deep love for your family and your firm commitment to God’s provision and care.
- Whether married or single you consider TCKs as part of your extended “family” and seek to invest yourself to influence them.

Do you have the necessary knowledge, experience, and skills in each of these descriptions?

Yes and No.

You already know some things. You have some skills. You have experience. *EXPLORE* will increase your knowledge, sharpen your skills, and enrich your experience. *EXPLORE* takes you on a journey that will help you grow, develop, and become better equipped for service wherever He leads you—whether that’s down the block or to the ends of the Earth.

EXPLORE is a tool for you to use

- to clarify God’s will for your life.
- to focus your learning toward becoming His excellent servant in the IMB context.
- to strengthen your gifts and skills for ministry.
- to consider the requirements of a cross-cultural worker’s lifestyle.

...it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you...that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.

Luke 1:3-4 ESV

Begin at the Beginning

Taking the first steps can be pretty scary. Or confusing. Or tricky. But the more you know the easier it will be. This section will help you know how to read and use the materials in the study guides. They're all set up the same way.

Each dimension study begins with a Self-Assessment. This element has the specific objectives for each characteristic in the dimension. You are asked to rate yourself on a scale from 1 to 5 to indicate how well the statement describes you. The results are tabulated for you and show up in a table with active links to the study for that particular characteristic. Follow the directions there to interpret your results and find the next materials to consider. Go [here](#) for more information about the Self-Assessment.

Each characteristic has one or two Bible verses which speak to the topic, plus the title banner and some introductory comments which should help you understand why this item is a part of the missionary picture.

There are four components to each characteristic's study.

1. **Activities for development.** Characteristics point to specific actions and attitudes that are part of the cross-cultural worker's life. We learn by doing, and this section identifies some activities you can *do* to develop your abilities. This is not an exhaustive list, but it's a place to begin developing your skills.

You will be asked to choose at least one or two activities which speak to the needs you identified with the Self-Assessment. You can do more if you have time.

Try to choose something that makes you step outside your comfort zone—something you've never done before.

Most of the exercises ask you to reflect in your journal. We'll look at [journals](#) in more detail below. For now, just commit to participating to the best of your ability.

2. **Resources for study.** This section identifies some resources you can read and review to gain more information. It's not a comprehensive or prioritized list but rather a sampler of some good things to consider.

Because of the fluid nature of online resources, some of the links might not work. They were all functional when we published. If one is broken, try going back to the main site referenced and search for the topic.

Be sure to keep notes and reflections on every resource you access, including how it speaks to your life and your call. Note any other references you find that are helpful.

3. **Accountability for growth.** This component focuses on values. The values we cultivate influence our perspective and our convictions—and ultimately our behavior. Here you will be asked to describe how you are growing and the commitment you are making to being *imitators of God*.

You'll connect with your mentor to explore your feelings and celebrate your successes, looking to the future as you seek God's direction.

The concept of mentor may be new to you. We will address the specifics of this vital aspect of your exploration a bit [later](#), including ways to find a mentor and what the mentor is expected to do to help you.

After you meet with your mentor, you'll be directed to go back to the self-assessment to see the progress you have made. Be sure to do this before you go on, and be sure to work some more if you are not pleased with your accomplishment.

- 4. Exploring further for service.** Focusing on the future, this is your set of next steps—a plan for action and accountability. This section asks you to write two or three goals based on what you have studied in the characteristic. We'll look at [goals](#) in depth below. There is a sample goal for each characteristic that you may choose to adopt or use as a guide for creating your own.

Using the Self-Assessment

Each dimension introduction contains the self-assessment. It's the first activity which sets the course for the rest of your work.

The items are statements which address various aspects of each of the characteristics which make up the dimension. The statements may or may not be applicable to you. The instructions ask you to “mark the answer that best describes you” and the possible answers are *nearly always*, *often*, *sometimes*, *rarely*, and *never*. Be honest with yourself.

Once you have completed the chart, take a break and then go to the next page. The results auto-calculate for you. If you have a higher total for a characteristic, then you need to work on it. If you have a lower number, then you can probably skip it. Talk with your mentor as you make your decision about what to study.

Click the link in the last column to reach the study for the characteristic.

After you complete work on a characteristic, come back to the self-assessment to see where you stand. If you still cannot honestly mark *nearly always* or *often*, you might benefit from further study. You and your mentor decide what is best for you.

Journals

Because your journal is your personal record, you'll need to find your own style—what works for you. Think of it as a conversation with yourself. You can be very detailed, You might have your own abbreviations. You might want to use different colors or fonts for different ideas. You might keep your journal on the computer or in a notebook.

Some common elements you should include are

- the date, and maybe the time if that impacts the entry.
- the assignment or at least the basis for your writing so you will know later why you were writing.
- your actions/thoughts.
- your reactions/feelings.
- Bible verses that apply or speak to you.
- insights revealed by the Holy Spirit.
- questions that arise—you might find the answer later or you might need to ask for help.
- notes to yourself when you review what you have written.
- specific items to discuss with your mentor.

Whatever you decide to do, be consistent and faithful.

And DO IT!

Ideas for keeping a prayer journal:

- Use a separate section of your personal journal or set up a new one—paper or electronic.
- Each day during your quiet time, record your prayer requests.
- Record what God says to you during your prayer time. Sometimes you may not feel like you hear anything, and other times there might be a lot. Hearing gets easier with practice.
- When you receive an answer to a request, not the time, the way it is answered, and other pertinent information.

Prayer Journals & Groups

Ideas for beginning a focused prayer group:

- With a small group of interested people, decide on a regular time and place to pray: someone's home, a room at church, or outdoors somewhere—wherever you feel comfortable and close to God.
- Determine what your focus will be: for example, mission needs, a specific people group who have never heard the gospel, needs in your congregation.
- Gather information to help you know how to pray. Check here for ideas: <http://www.imb.org/main/pray/default.asp>.
- Establish a journal for the group to record requests and answers.

You & Your Mentor

[Dictionary.com](https://www.dictionary.com) says a *mentor* is a wise and trusted counselor or teacher.

A *spiritual mentor* is someone who

- is spiritually mature.
- is an active witness and leads people to Christ.
- discipled new believers.
- is knowledgeable about and committed to missions.
- has the gift of encouragement.
- is able to provide accountability.
- is willing and able to give adequate time and effort to your participation in *EXPLORE*.

To find your mentor

- pray for guidance and wisdom.
- consult with your pastor, campus minister, or other church leader.
- decide on someone to consider and contact that person.
- explain your need to the person.
 - ◇ Tell him/her you are working in a study called *EXPLORE*.
 - ◇ Express your need for someone to counsel, encourage, guide, and hold you accountable. Share the responsibilities listed below and in the [Mentor Handbook](#).

- ◇ provide an outline of time, frequency, and preparation he/she will need to make, including a projected date of completion.
- ◇ Give him/her an opportunity to review the *EXPLORE* materials by sharing the electronic files.
- ◇ Ask the person to prayerfully consider your request.
- ◇ Set a time to receive a response.

The mentor is responsible for

- meeting with the explorer on a regular basis.
- helping the explorer process and evaluate the learning resources and activities.
- providing a listening ear.
- encouraging the explorer to excellent learning.
- giving direct and gentle correction when necessary.

To benefit from your mentor

- set the meeting place and times in advance.
- keep the appointment or notify the mentor ahead of time if you cannot meet. Be sure to exchange contact information and preferred methods of communication.
- inform the mentor in advance of each meeting regarding the topics you want to discuss and any specific help you need.
- be willing to follow the mentor's guidance and instruction.
- tell the mentor what has been helpful and encouraging at each meeting.

Meetings with your mentor should be

- scheduled on a regular basis. The two of you should decide together on the frequency and total number of meetings you expect to have.
- 45 minutes to one hour in length.
- in a place that is quiet and free from interruption, including cell phones.
- a time that you share a report of your progress, your challenges, and your questions.
- a time of prayer together.

Take a few minutes to look through the [Mentor Handbook](#) so you know what is included there before you share it with your mentor. Print out the covenant page to sign with your mentor.

You might decide to change mentors when you study different dimensions. Be careful to follow these guidelines each time you begin working with a new person.

Writing Goals

We've asked you to write some goals at the end of each characteristic's study. This section will help you know how to make them useful.

In *The Purpose Driven Life*, Rick Warren (Zondervan, 2002) says:

Develop the habit of writing down exactly what you intend to do. This action step should be *personal* (involving *you*), *practical* (something you can *do*), and *provable* (with a *deadline* to it). Every application will involve either your relationship to God, your relationship to others, or your personal character. (p. 192)

The format to use is repeated in each characteristic:

Goal 1	
In the next	[time period]
I will	[action]
so that	[benefit]
I'll know it's done when	[observable result]

Be sure to follow through and be accountable to reach your goals. Discuss with your mentor and pray about it.

Let's Get Started

At this point you should have an idea of who you want to be your mentor, with a plan set to talk with that person and get going in your study. Please don't do too much before you have an agreement with your mentor.

The mentor is a vital part of the EXPLORE process.

Once you're ready to go, begin with the Disciple Dimension. The directions are in that document and each of the others. The links will help you get to things in the suggested order of study. Along the way we've included information about contacting IMB and finding more resources to help with your preparation for cross-cultural service.

Blessings as you explore!