

# BOOK REVIEW



## SERVING AS SENDERS

By Neal Pirolo

**I READ IT BECAUSE:** I was given this book by a friend who served as a mission's pastor at a large church in Iowa. We had just sent out our first missionary as a home church. He gave it to me as a gift.

**SUBJECT MATTER:** This is a "how to" book about caring for your returning missionaries. The book stirs within the reader a desire to do repair the standard mode of operation for returning missionaries. The author creates the case for attentive care of missionaries returning from the field. He uses real accounts of missionaries who have returned to find little to no support. I came away from the book desiring to help assimilate our missionaries back into our culture.

**SUMMARY:** As Neal Pirolo crisscrossed the United States and several other countries conducting the Serving As Senders Seminar, it became increasingly clear to him that of the six areas of care, reentry care is the least understood. Grieved by the lack of care when a missionary returns home, he was motivated to provide the Church and missions community with this resource.

The Reentry Team: Caring for Your Returning Missionaries, in Part I, Chapter 1 establishes the joint responsibility for missionary care between the Church and mission agency. Chapter 2 lays a clear five-point Scriptural pattern for a successful reentry. That is followed quickly in Chapter 3 with discussion of the "human dilemma" which makes it so difficult to follow that pattern. Part II is comprised of 70—good and not-so-good—stories written by returning missionaries. Commentary follows each story to help the reader identify with the situation, provide solutions, and then translate those solutions into help for his own returning missionary friend. Part III contains several general articles of value and a reference section.

Consider what Peter Jordan, author of *Re-entry; Making the Transition from Missions to Life at Home*, said about the book: "THE REENTRY TEAM is a 'must read' for church leaders and laymen alike. Its practical wisdom and touchingly true-to-life stories will, without condemnation, assist the church in receiving back the ones they have sent out. The results? Healthy returnees will make enormous contributions to body life at home, the church will be blessed and built up, and world missions will go forward."

**QUOTABLE:** "If you are diligent in properly sending out your missionary, you also need to carve out the time and energy to bring him home safely." Pg. 26

"Your missionary friends need the opportunity to "rehearse all"! There are two levels of debriefing needs that your friend has: Public and private. In our training of missionaries, we encourage them not to even ask for the "ten minutes on Sunday morning." Pg. 29

"I hold all missionaries "guiltless" upon reentry. Yes, They should have, they could have, it might have been, if only... ! And we do train missionaries in preparation for reentry. However, the fact of the matter is now. They are what they are whatever they are, and they need our help. Therefore, we need to be available to them. Even to pick up the "thousand" pieces they may have broken into." Pg. 158

"I would go so far as to say, if you do not have the people to care for your missionaries while they are preparing to go, while they are on the field and when they return home, don't send them out! How structured a program of care you provide is not the issue – personal care is." Pg. 251

"We found the American culture very isolated and solitary, and my wife went through severe depression and panic attacks until she was dramatically healed in a service at our new church?" pg.282

**WHO SHOULD READ THIS BOOK?** This book should be read by any church leader who oversees the global mission ministry in a local church. It would also be helpful for mission committee members and missionaries coming off the field. I provided a copy to the parents of a missionary we sent out from our church. It proved to be very helpful to them.

**RECOMMENDATION:** I recommend all pastors to read this book. I found most of the material to be helpful. I finished the book being more informed and equipped to provide the support needed to returning missionaries.

