

TO BECOME A MISSIONARY PILOT...

First and foremost, a missionary pilot is a missionary! That means that one must be sure of his or her personal relationship with Christ, and be a growing, maturing Christian. The call of the missionary is to share the Good News of Jesus the Savior, and we cannot give what we do not possess! Because the missionary pilot will literally be on the “front line” of spiritual warfare, there must be a measure of spiritual maturity and stability of Christian life. So, in your time of preparation, be active in your local church, growing in Christ!

Secondly, one who aspires to mission work must be a student of God’s Word. The better equipped soldier is always in a position of advantage on the battlefield, and this is true in spiritual warfare as well. Time spent in the study of God’s Word is of primary importance, and most mission agencies require a minimum of one year credit at the Bible school/college level. The missionary pilot, even if not engaged in direct teaching/preaching ministry, will often find opportunities to share and teach concerning the faith. And, the mission pilot is often involved in a ministry of encouragement to other mission personnel. To know God’s Word is as important to the mission pilot as piloting skills!

Thirdly, a high level of technical competence is needed. Merely “having the ratings” as a pilot is not enough! A missionary pilot needs more than just average piloting skills. Minimum requirements are to have a commercial pilot license with an instrument rating. Some missions will require a multi-engine rating, and even though tailwheel aircraft are less common than they were, the experience gained is a help to every pilot. Most mission agencies also require a minimum pilot experience level, usually in the 500-hour range, prior to beginning their specific training program. Because many pilots serve in remote areas, an aircraft mechanic’s license is often required in addition to the pilot certifications. The more diverse the training and experience a pilot receives, the more valuable the mission pilot’s contribution to the ministry. A program of aviation training that is mission-specific is helpful on several levels. It helps to have the counsel of those familiar with mission work, which does differ from commercial aviation. And, training in a Christian environment, learning from spiritual as well as technical mentors, helps to prepare you for a life of service. Strive for excellence and diversity as you build your skills!

Fourthly, “collateral skills” are important to the mission pilot. Beyond being a pilot and mechanic, the mission pilot may find need for computer skills, radio communications and electronics skills, general mechanic and “handyman” abilities, some background in emergency medicine, and a willingness to learn other new skills as needed! A missionary pilot does not merely have a job, he has a *call*...a call to serve, that comes directly from the Lord. Thinking of your calling as a “job” is a serious mistake, one that is unfortunately all too common. This leads to burn-out and disillusionment, and a failure of the ministry. Openness to be used *as God sees fit*, whether that meets with our expectations or not, is the key to success in missions work.

Finally, those who aspire to mission work must be ready and willing to live sacrificially. Jesus is our example, and the lives of His apostles also exemplify the missionary call. You may be called upon to give up a life of plenty for a life of austerity...you may be called to put off marriage and family...you may even be called upon to lay down your life for the cause of Christ. One thing is certain, if you go into mission work with the idea that it will be a life of ease, you will certainly be disappointed! But, if you go in with the idea that you will experience fulfillment walking with the Lord, you will NOT be disappointed!

As you consider preparing for service as a mission pilot, begin today to be a missionary! Every believer has a calling to share Christ, and if we are unable or unwilling to do so at home, it is unlikely we will be more successful at it overseas. Be faithful where God has you today, and He will lead you in the future as well. Begin by praying and being prayed for by a group of believers...get your church involved in praying with and for you! Be wise in financial matters, for the missionary pilot faces a double dilemma in that area: you need expensive training as a pilot, and you need to accomplish it without indebtedness, as most missions will not consider you if you have a load of debt. God’s call is always confirmed by God’s people, so listen to the counsel of Christian brothers and sisters as you seek His will. There is much to consider in this calling, many obstacles to overcome. But, if God is indeed calling you to service in mission aviation, ***He will provide!***