

SPECIAL
POINTS OF
INTEREST

- The image of man is critical to defining who we are. This image begins with God in Genesis 1:27 and extends into all areas of our life!
- Our Image reflects God's divine nature whether we are an open missionary or restricted access worker.
- Calling vs Status: clarifying spiritual calling from legal status is critical in understanding our image.
- Your life is like an atom; it is three dimensional, multi-faceted, and guided by a nucleus.
- Most importantly, the appearance of the surface is defined by the core; it is NEVER the opposite.

Remember!

Developing your image is about revealing others what you want them to know about you; not hiding the things you don't.

While traditional security training may focus on what you should not say, Image focuses on what you can and should tell others about yourself.

It's not about concealing information, it's about exposing the truth!



Developing Image

How to develop credibility and legitimacy in international service.

Let's Start with You

Every year, more and more Christians are seeking to serve in locations that are considered restricted to Gospel advance. The goal of this primer is to help you, the called, develop your God-given image that substantiates both your calling and your vocation while living internationally.

Developing your image is more than just coming up with a few short statements about who you are or what you are doing. Developing your image requires you to understand your identity in Christ and how the world perceives that image. It also means developing a narrative that clearly communicates to others the essence of your

image: who you are, what you do, and why you are doing it.

Your image always begins and ends with identity in Christ. However, your narrative (the stories that communicate your image) are broad, complex, and as

"As a follower of Christ, I am called not to comfort or success, but to obedience. Consequently, my life is to be defined not by what I do but by who I am."

First Stanza of the Fusion Creed

diverse.

Remember! When it comes to your image, the more facets of your life you take into account, the richer your narrative will become. Facets that come immediately to mind include: life experiences, education, certifications, and achievements. However, facets could/should also include your family, your testimony, and your calling.

The Takeaway:

Remember, your image is holistic and organic as well as spiritual and practical (more on that later...). Most of all, your image demonstrate to others who –and what– you are!

You, the Atom?

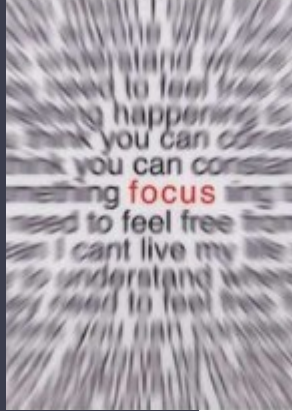
Your identity is who you are and your image is how you are viewed by others. you like an atom; three dimensional, multi-faceted, and always moving and changing. At the center of the atom is the nucleus. The nucleus guides the activity of the atom: how it acts, how it reacts, and how it develops over time.

The nucleus our atom is Christ in us. As believers, God directs and influences our lives from His word, through our hearts and minds, and even through circumstances, and This process directly impacts our image in Christ and before others. This means that, depending on the day, someone may see a part of your image they have never seen before,—although it

was there all the time.

Most importantly, the appearance of the surface of an atom (your image) is defined by the core; it is NEVER the opposite. Who you are will always define what you do. **The Takeaway:** Understanding your makeup is critical not only for developing your image, but also for how God wants to use you to reach the nations.

Focus!
Who you are will
always determine
what you do.



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CONCILIUM



Be, Know, Do.

The core values of our image are embedded in the foundation of BE, KNOW, and DO.

BE encompasses who we are in Christ (born again believers) and what we are to become (Christlike).

KNOW involves what we learn as followers of Christ throughout our lives (this includes studying to show ourselves approved workmen unto Christ...).

DO is how we live out BE and KNOW.

As a Christians who we are will always define what we do. That said, this DOES NOT mean that our vocation must, or will, necessarily match our calling (reference Paul the tent maker sustaining himself while making disciples). While disciples can (and should) be made through our vocation, ultimately our calling transcends vocation. We are called to make disciples regardless of our paid vocation (church pastor vs elementary school teacher;

international “missionary” vs international businessman. The list goes on.

The takeaway:

When it comes to BE, KNOW, and DO, never confuse your vocation with your calling; especially when it comes to **missional living**. Your image is your image regardless of your vocation, and who you are defines what you do (making disciples) not your job title, your paid vocation, or your visa status.

The Modern Challenge of Personal Calling and Legal Status

The truth is, two centuries of Western church tradition is grating against key scriptural principles laid down in the Word of God—and wreaking havoc with our image. Keep reading to learn why,

God in His word has called His followers to fulfill the Great Commission. This is part of the believer’s commitment to **Gospel obedience** (Mathew 24:14; 28:18-20; Acts 1:8, etc.).

God desires for our personal obedience to fulfill the Great Commission while exemplifying the Greatest Commandment. This means sharing the Gospel, making disciples, and living in such a way that people see Christ in every facet of our lives. We let them see the IMAGE of Christ in us!

This kind of personal obedience is to be reflected, according to Acts 1:8, from an individual’s Jerusalem, all the way to the ends of the earth. This type of living is also known as an evangelistic or ‘missional’ lifestyle.

In the last 200 years the call to disciple making internationally has been accepted by (or perhaps relegated to) only a select few in the church.

Part of this is due to the “professionalization” of ministry and establishment of vocational church leadership (the clergy). This can be seen through formal and professional education requirements for ministry leadership and the legal process of ministry licensing. While this is not a bad thing, the unintended

result has been the establishment of a formal classification of “vocational minister.” Their ordination is recognized by the government, and the church body relies on them to do the “work” of ministry.

Thus, those committed to the work of “missional living” are viewed through the lens of a professional ministry vocation (usually designated with the term ‘pastor’ or ‘minister’, or ‘reverend’)). Likewise the term ‘missionary’ is generally used to describe someone considered to be a ‘professional’ (often expatriate) religious worker.

Those who occupy these positions are extolled for living a lifestyle committed to the Great Commission.



The problem is, this “professional class” of Christian has led to a perception of “we are professionals, don’t try this at home.” And those at home have willfully obliged.

During the missions movement in colonial times, both Catholics and Protestants established vocational missionaries. This, in turn, began to reinforce a worldview that a ‘missionary’ is more than an ordinary

individual believer or layman being sent out to serve in obedience of God; they were now sent as a formal representative of church.

This gave rise to multiple generations of religious “professionals” who gained recognition through academic certification and position—regardless of personal calling.

Concurrently, the church’s influence on Western governments, and many of their former colonies, led those governments to create a designated legal status for religious work. This legal status is known as a religious worker or “missionary” visa.



This might take some consideration...

By the mid 20th Century, tens of thousands of Western Gospel workers were utilizing these visas to justify their presence internationally. But things began to change.

By the 21st Century relying on a missionary visa for residency in some countries began to carry a negative stigma. Additionally, Gospel workers serving in countries on a missionary visa

without a Christian heritage became either (at best) highly scrutinized, or (worse) deported or refused entry

altogether.

Calling, Status, and Legitimate Access

During the 20th Century, a new generation of Gospel workers were going to the nations. Many were going independently (apart from a denominational sending agency), raising their own support or working foreign jobs while living incarnationally.

Using a funding strategy known traditionally as ‘tent making’, these believers supported themselves though a mixture of

personal support raising and working in marketplace vocations with their secular skills and education.

The term “tent making” comes from the fact that the apostle Paul supported himself by making tents while living and preaching in Corinth according to Acts 18:3. Tent making, at its core, is a timeless principle modeled by the Apostle Paul as he endeavored to share the Gospel and maintain a living in the process.

Many American pastors and ministers in the USA practice a similar form of tent making, known simply as being bi-vocational. In other words, the pastor works a secular job to provide for his family while he leads ministry at church.

Tent making strategy models provide Gospel workers with access to areas restricting Gospel advance. This is because tent making justifies a person’s legal presence where the traditional missionary visa is either undesirable or unavailable. You could say these strategies are just another way for Gospel workers to be bi-vocational in the nations!

Though times change, the principle stays the same: Christians utilizing their vocation to make disciples in the nations!

“Tent making, at its core, is a timeless principle modeled by the Apostle Paul as he endeavored to share the Gospel and maintain a living in the process.”

Lets Get Started!

The rest of this primer is designed to help you develop image (personal, professional, and spiritual), rooted in your identity, and communicated through a narrative that connects with your audience without comprising the truth.

REMEMBER! This exercise is not an end in itself. You must ensure that your image includes a narrative build on credible documentation: forensic information, both physical and virtual that validates who you are an what you are doing.

This information is to be readily available and intended to be collected and used by others to reinforce the truth of your image.



Having a good image will help you to **BLOOM** where you are planted!



Section 1: Life Influencers

Use this section to outline (bullet point style) several major life influencers that have helped to shape who you are as a person and as a believer. This could include (but not limited to: salvation, education, marriage, other life experiences, etc.).

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Section 2: Achievements & Awards

Use this section to outline (bullet point style) life achievements; both secular and sacred. This could include (but not limited to): individual awards, certifications, diplomas, military or civilian service, etc.

Helpful Hint: Don't be shy! These achievements will help you develop your image.

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Section 3: Vocational Decisions

1. When you move overseas, what vocation will you endeavor to fulfill (be specific: college professor teaching mathematics, general medicine doctor, LPN, humanitarian aid worker specializing in clean water, etc.):
2. In your vocation, who will you be working for (if it is an established company, place the company name below). If it is a company that is to be established by you, place the likely name of the company below:

Section 4: Certification and Validation:

From Section 2, briefly note the certifications, awards, or other validations that can help to justify your holding this vocation internationally (as appropriate):

Section 5: Anticipated Final Visa Status

In this box write down your anticipated final (long term) visa status. This is the visa you plan to use long term overseas (NOTE: Many people will enter a country on a tourist visa and then switch their visa status once in country. **DEPENDING ON THE COUNTRY**, this is a normal procedure. Check with your supervisor or host nation's immigration law as you make these decisions.

IMPORTANT: Make sure that your visa status supports your vocation!



Section 6: Credible Activities

Based on Sections 3-5, ***in two sentences or less per bullet point***, write down five different activities that your vocation would have you involved with while living in-country. Remember: keep it simple and straightforward; one sentence is really best.

Examples:

“As a math teacher, I will be teaching algebra at the Polytechnic School in the Capital.”

”As an American, I will be meeting with students to tell them about my culture, history, and background.”

“As a businessperson, I will be purchasing and exporting handcrafts from marginalized women.”

“I will be opening a workout gym and providing health and fitness resources to the community.”



Section 7: Credible Conversations

Based on the five credible activities in Section 6, write a paragraph or 3-5 sentences for each Credible Activity you noted. This will help you broaden out that activity into a conversation piece.

NOTE: These paragraphs are the foundation for your Credible Conversations about your vocational activities abroad so don't skip!



Section 8: Calling/Vocation Matrix

Based on the Credible Activities in Section 6, ***in two sentences or less per bullet point***, write down five different ways that you can share the Gospel and make disciples through your vocation.

Keep it simple and straightforward!



Section 9: Credible Justification

Who you are defines what you do. Based on the Calling/Vocation Matrix of Section 8 (and in light of the Credible Activities in Section 6) write a paragraph or 3-5 sentences for each bullet point from Section 8 that can explain how your calling is fulfilled through your vocation.

NOTE: These paragraphs are critical in defining for others who you are from the perspective of your vocation (ask questions if you need clarification here!).



Section 10: Credible Documentation:

Credible documentation (physical and virtual) helps you to strengthen your image by reinforcing what you are telling your audience. Credible documentation helps foreign official correctly 'profile' who you are by using online and social media resources as well as physical documentation such as paper trails that reinforce the truth and authenticity of who you are. Generally this is done in several different ways:

- ◆ Legal Documents
- ◆ Certificates and Diplomas
- ◆ Social Media Presence
- ◆ Websites
- ◆ Property Documents
- ◆ Tax records
- ◆ Flight itineraries/ticketing
- ◆ Other Resources?

Take time to research what is currently found online about you. For this section, please search your name on Google, yahoo, Bing, or other search engines.

Based on your research, can you establish a congruent (true and authentic) picture of who you and what you are doing?

-OR-

Are there specific documents and resources that may DISCREDIT your image that need to be cleaned up?

Please write your thoughts and concerns below:



Section 11: Using Social Media to Your Advantage:

Social media is a powerful tool that can be crafted not only to authenticate your image, but to leverage your credibility. A decade ago, the general consensus was it was better for restricted access workers to avoid social media in order to avoid being connected (or implicated...) through their associations. Well, times have changed.

Today, so many people utilize social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, and others, to say that you don't utilize social media is actually a red flag to governments (not to mention your next door neighbors...).

Understanding how social media works is important. Understanding you are your own gatekeeper when it comes to what you publish is also important. The goal is to develop a congruency between your social media footprint, your activities in a country, and your visa status. This is more than just mere documentation; it is professional empowerment that opens doors for relationships and ministry.

Here are some ideas:

- Review and sharpen your “likes” and “follows:” Like and follow pages that are popular in your sector of work. Are you a teacher? Join multiple international teacher communities on Facebook. Are you a humanitarian? Like and follow the United Nations, World Food Program, etc. LinkedIn is especially helpful.
- Regularly share and repost articles concerning your sector of work. This builds a social media footprint that helps reinforce who you are.
- Diversify your friends list. If all of your friends are white evangelical Christians, that's pretty telling. Develop out a friends list that includes multiple internationals, especially where you live which might include Muslims, Hindus, atheists, Communists, etc.

Remember! It's up to you to be proactive and develop your image. You are only limited by your own creativity and initiative!

Section 12: Bring it Together:

Congratulations! You are on your way to developing your image. Use this section to ask any critical questions that may need to be answered to polish your image.

If you have some inconsistencies, clearly identify what they are and ask some hard questions on what you can do to eliminate those inconsistencies and develop credibility.



Closing Thoughts

Remember when it comes to developing your image, this exercise is just the beginning. You need to ensure you have credible backstopping in place to provide interested parties something tangible to find and document who you are and what you are doing.

Use this page for extra notes during class!

