

## What Should I Expect?

Greg Gwin

*This is brother Gwin's answer to one who was considering overseas labor and wanted to know what he should expect in that kind of work:*

Dear Brother,

I commend you for your interest in preaching the gospel, especially in a foreign place. I'm sure my experiences in the former Soviet Union would be much different than what you will find in Austria. However, some things would be the same. For instance, you must be prepared for a sense of "isolation." You will be far from home and family without the opportunity to travel easily to see them. Also, you will not have many other Christians to associate with, at least initially. Simply living in a different culture also takes lots of adjustment. But it is all worth it when one considers the important work of taking God's word to so many lost souls.

I would recommend setting some specific goals before you go. Keep track of your progress towards accomplishing those goals. These might include things like translating and printing tracts on various important subjects, conducting public Bible lectures, etc. If you don't do this, you may become discouraged that you "aren't getting anything done." The work may be slow, but with a "plan," you will see some real results.

I would also caution you to be on guard for people who have corrupt motives. This is hard to deal with, but you will discover some who are interested in you because they see you as a way to get something (other than God's truth). My advice would be to only offer the gospel. Do not get into the trap of trying to help people get to the United States for visits or college educations, etc. I'm not saying this is bad in and of itself, but it will detract from your more important work.

Pray constantly for wisdom to deal with the people in the best way. They will do many things differently. Our cultural differences will sometimes serve as a point of friction. Be flexible. They have to submit to the specifics of God's word, but they don't have to submit to our judgments in non-doctrinal areas. An older preacher offered this sage advice: "They have to become Christians, but they don't have to become Americans." Be adaptable.

Remember that your personal conduct will be under intense scrutiny. The people will be formulating impressions about Christianity by everything they see you do and say. Be careful. Go the extra mile to avoid anything that might leave a bad impression or even be questionable in their minds. They will hold you to a higher standard than they live by themselves. This may not be "fair," but it is reality, and you must understand it.

Again, I commend you for your interest in this important work. If I can help in any other way, please call on me. God speed!

in Him,