

*Wycliffe Bible Translators, International  
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*International Member Care*

In WBT's screening of potential members, considerable attention has been given to various negative traits which are significant (and undesirable) with positive traits assumed by the absence of the negative ones. Recognizing that missionary life calls for special qualities which will be uniquely tested, a committee of Christian care-givers and mission personnel has identified and described behaviorally the following qualities of a hardy personality, positive traits that will enable the cross cultural worker to serve God joyfully and be productive under difficult situations; i.e. to retain and maintain emotional, physical and spiritual health.

Lack of any of these traits is an indicator that growth is needed, not a cause for guilt or shame. The greatest missionary of all acknowledged his weakness (II Cor. 12:9-10), and his sinfulness (I Tim. 1:15-16), but endured crushing experiences (II Cor. 4:7-10; II Cor. 11:23-28) and drew his strength from Christ (Phil. 4:12-13). So may we.

The reason for describing these qualities behaviorally rather than accepting the candidate's statement of their presence is that the behavioral manifestation is likely to be more accurate than the verbal claim.

The members of the committee are deeply committed to God's standards, and the utilization of His resources. While it is possible for a non-Christian to be emotionally hardy, the godly person brings to all of life an acknowledgment of personal inadequacy and of God's sufficiency, and a compassionate awareness of human frailty in self and others. So for the godly person, hardiness does not replace dependence on God, or do away with a sense of weakness. Rather, it considers dependence on God to be the source of hardiness and the strength of weakness. All glory belongs "...to him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy..." (Jude 24).

- **Pain, Pleasure And Deprivation**

Pain is not something to be shunned at all cost, nor is pleasure something to be sought at any cost. Both are simply part of life, not its main focus (John 10:10; 16:33; II Tim. 3:12; Phil. 1:29). The hardy person does not insist on having all his needs met. He is able to forego gratification. He knows that Phil. 4:11-12 precede Phil. 4:19, and he remembers that Jesus had unmet needs too. Willing to be content in all circumstances, this person is non-demanding, not necessarily choosing to do without, but able to accept what is available.

*Do I grumble or complain constantly? frequently? How easily do I feel sorry for myself? What do I do when I feel like that? Am I "going without" anything today? How do I feel about that? What do I have to have to be happy?*

- **Balance**

This individual shows balance in his emotional, spiritual, physical, relational and professional life. He does not habitually overindulge in one area to the detriment of another, not needing "highs" or shots of adrenaline in order to survive and enjoy life. He is not easily addicted to anything. (This does not refer to substance abuse or other compulsive destructive behaviors, but is about the excessive "need" for certain good things in order to be happy - exercise, companionship, approval, etc.) The hardy person knows both how to do without for the short haul and how to be creative in meeting his legitimate needs over the long haul. (I Tim. 4:11-13).

*If my life could be represented by a page, how full would it be with the routine things expected of me, along with my own commitments? How big are the margins? How do I use my free time? What is missing in my life? What is out of balance? Who is being hurt by the way I'm living my life right now? What am I willing to change?*

- **Leadership**

The hardy person does not need to be in charge nor does he abdicate responsibility when others are in control. He is a team player. Leadership is neither something to be sought nor something to be feared. He is willing to lead or to follow (to submit to those whom God has placed in authority), believing that “God delights to work through the leaders he places over us” (Rom. 13:1; Heb. 13:17). No matter who is in charge, he maintains his commitment to the task. This person is not passive, controlling, or helpless. Barnabas illustrates this attitude beautifully (Acts 9:26-28; 11:22-26; 12:25; 13:1-15). The sermon Paul preached in Acts 13:16-41 seems to have established Paul as the leader from that time onward, but before that, Barnabas was in charge.

*How do I respond when I am told to do something I do not agree with? When do I find it most difficult to submit to authority? Why is this? How do I respond when I am asked to accept leadership?*

- **Perspective**

The hardy person is not narcissistic, knowing “the plot doesn’t revolve around me; the story doesn’t begin or end with me—it’s His story. I am part of something bigger than I, and even if I don’t see the logic or the resolution of this situation, I will keep on trusting God, who is sovereign in all situations.” (Dan. 3:16-18). This person can handle defeat because he is assured of ultimate victory, realizing his approval comes from God, not from people (II Tim. 2:15).

*How much appreciation and/or acknowledgment do I need from others? When has someone else gotten credit for something I have done? How did I feel? What did I do? How would I react if that happened now?*

- **Self-Knowledge**

Non-defensive, the hardy personality displays an extraordinarily high level of self-awareness. He knows his strengths and weaknesses and is comfortable with these. This frees him from self-absorption and allows him to practice the agape love of I Cor. 13:4-7. He is not blind or in denial, nor is he compelled to compare himself with others (II Cor. 10:12). He is aware of his own level of need for rest and relaxation and addresses these and other needs as they arise.

*Who am I? What qualities in myself do I thank God for? Where do I need to grow? What dissatisfies me about myself? By what standard do I measure myself?*

- **Accountability To God**

A hardy person does not tolerate known sin in himself. Known thoroughly by God (Ps. 139:1-18), he invites God’s searchlight (vs. 23-24) and lives in the presence of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:30), dealing courageously with his own sin (1 John 1:8-9) and carefully and compassionately with the sin of other people (John 8:7; II Cor. 6:14; Eph. 5:11; I Thes. 3:13). He “keeps short accounts”, forgiving offenses as they occur, asking for forgiveness when appropriate.

*What things are sin to me? Is anything I used to consider wrong becoming acceptable to me? How is my hunger for righteousness manifested in my life? What could I do that would increase my spiritual health? Do I feel bitter toward anyone? What will I do to take care of that? Have I neglected to ask forgiveness for any known offense? When I think of forgiving others, what comes to mind? How do I feel? Where am I not at peace in my relationships?*

- **Responsibility**

Able to accept responsibility, the hardy person sees himself as having an impact on life, an effect on those around him. He is comfortable taking credit for the good he does, and willing to take blame for the bad that he does. He is not a blamer of others. He understands that wherever he is, he is making something better or worse. While he does not deny or rationalize his mistakes or avoid responsibility, neither does he assume total responsibility. (Responsibility is not a biblical word, but we believe it is a biblical concept.)

*Have I ever been unjustly blamed? What was my response? How could I have responded in a more healthy way? When I make a mistake, how do I feel? What do I do? How do I receive credit? When credit for something I've done is taken by someone else, what do I do or think?*

- **Generosity**

A hardy person lives life richly--giving love, energy, resources, time. He is generous, open, trusting, working, giving. He does not hoard. He sees himself as one living in community, and shares in order that his brother should not be in need (Ruth 2:14-18; Luke 6:38; II Cor. 8). He also realizes that receiving from others, allowing them to be part of God's provision, can be an act of generosity and is necessary for his own well-being.

*How do I invest myself in my world of family, friends, coworkers and others? What am I willing to let people do for me?*

- **Gratitude**

The hardy person walks in gratitude. He believes that "we are...mutually dependent on one another" (Rom. 12:5). He does not consider himself 'entitled' to what he is given but, realizing that every thing he receives has cost someone else, lets people know their gifts of time and substance are valued. He accepts his own weaknesses, helplessness and need of 'one another' care without shame, graciously allowing others to minister to him. He values the synergy of reciprocal ministry. "Cultivate thankfulness" (Col. 3:15b, The MESSAGE).

*Who have I thanked this week? Who do I need to thank? How do I react when people thank me?*

- **Hope/Joy**

This person has a wonderful sense of hope which anchors him (Heb. 6:10), giving him stability in time of storm (Heb. 10:23). This confidence in God makes a daily, positive difference in his life (I Jn. 3:3). The hardy person is not habitually pessimistic, critical, or easily discouraged when situations look black. His hope frees him to experience joy in his daily life (Rom. 12:12).

*On a scale of zero to 100, with zero being a complete pessimist, 100 being a complete optimist, where do I fall most of the time? Do I inspire optimism or negativity in others?*

- **Resourcefulness**

The hardy person is innovative and creative. This refers to the way he conceptualizes and utilizes options and resources. "I have only two pieces of wood and a string. Let's see what I can do to fix that pump." He is not easily defeated, waiting for someone else to do something, nor does he demand the ideal. This person is inventive, looking actively for options, not helplessly waiting to be bailed out. His approach to problem solving is "Let's see what I can do". Paul's escape in a basket (II Cor. 11:33) wasn't very dignified but it certainly shows initiative on someone's part.

*How easy is it for me to give up when faced with an obstacle? How hard is it for me to find another way to deal with a situation when things go wrong?*

- **Flexibility**

A hardy person is able to enjoy second choice. "I really wanted to do that, but it's raining and I can't. I'll do this instead." This person can enjoy what is, rather than pout about what he cannot have. Disappointment does not send this person into a tailspin (Phil. 4:12-13).

*How, specifically, have I been disappointed recently? How did I feel about that? What did I do? say? How long did it take me to recover? find a second choice?*

- **Sense Of Humor**

Hardiness is reflected in the individual's use of humor, i.e. he can laugh at himself, does not take himself too seriously, is not easily offended if someone laughs at him. He teases others gently. He manifests spontaneity and flexibility, enjoys the richness and variety of God's creation.

*What makes me laugh? What have I laughed at this week? When have I laughed at myself?*

- **Rejection**

The hardy person is not so fragile that failure defines or defeats him. He learns from his mistakes. He has the ability to pick up the pieces and restart after a failure, a rebuff, or a rejection. This makes him easy to supervise (e.g. a consultant overseeing a language project). "Having fallen down and hurt myself won't keep me from trying again."

*How much of my energy is spent remembering hurts? Who are the people I do not enjoy? Who do I think does not like me? Why not? Where is there anger in my life? How does it show itself? Has my anger turned to bitterness in any way? What can I do about this? Am I willing to be evaluated? By whom?*

- **Courtesy**

A hardy person knows that the lubricant of life is good manners, a respectful awareness of others and an easing of their way by attention to cultural niceties. "I am not an island. I cannot do as I please or act out negative feelings. I am aware of my impact on others." "...Steadily pouring yourselves out for each other in acts of love, alert at noticing differences and quick at mending fences" (Eph. 4:2-3, The MESSAGE). John 19:26-27 records Jesus' entrusting His mother's care to John. This meant Mary would not have to beg or worry. Anticipatory effort to make another's life smoother is the essence of good manners.

*How do others experience me in my daily interactions with them? Do I treat people as I would like to be treated? Do I respect others' needs and wishes? Do I recognize them?*

- **Use Of Time**

A hardy person is a self-motivated starter when necessary. He can reframe boredom into some semblance of productivity, making an unexpected 'loss' of time into something useful. He is able to benefit from reflective and/or interactive times and balance personal and social time for his own well-being. (Col. 3:23 The MESSAGE; Eph. 5:16; Col. 4:5)

*How was I thwarted, delayed or sidetracked this week? How did I react? How satisfied am I by the way I used time this week? Where would I make changes?*

- **Support**

The hardy person identifies and maintains a personal support system. He can develop healthy relationships in a group (family, church, mission, neighborhood, etc.), setting appropriate boundaries, realizing the mutual impact people have on each other. (I Cor. 12:7-26; Eph. 4:15-16)

*How much time did I spend this week communicating with supporters, fellowshiping with friends, reaching out? Where do I need to make changes? How can I do this?*

- **Learning**

A hardy person is open to new ideas and ways of doing things. He is a life-long learner, willing to give up the comfort of the “way we’ve always done it” for the challenge and risk of implementing creative new ways and ideas. He does not hesitate to ask for input from others. (Prov. 1:2-5; The MESSAGE; Prov. 9:9 NKJV; 16:23 NKJV)

*How do I respond to correction? How open am I to changing the way I do things? How open am I to new information, methods, etc? In what area would I like to develop? What can I do to accomplish that?*

- **Conflict Resolution/Confrontation**

Hardiness can withstand attack and face confrontation without a loss of inner balance. Such a person works to listen non-defensively, to hear and assess input without owning what is said, and to respond honestly to the issues raised. He is willing to change where he needs to but does not give in to manipulation. He is neither controlled nor devastated by others’ opinions.

*Can I disagree with someone on an issue without taking it personally? without attributing bad motives to him? How do I feel when confronted? How do I act? What would help me deal more healthily with criticism? On what issues, what conditions am I willing to confront someone or take a stand?*

These behavioral, observable demonstrations of hardiness are skills and attitudes anchored in God’s Word, achieved with God’s help, and practiced to God’s glory. Growth is made possible by accurate self-knowledge nourished by Scripture, empowered by the Spirit of God, in company with like-minded followers of Jesus. We will become strong enough. “We pray that you’ll have the strength to stick it out over the long haul--not the grim strength of gritting your teeth but the glory-strength God gives. It is strength that endures the unendurable and spills over into joy, thanking the Father who makes us strong enough to take part in everything bright and beautiful that He has for us” (Col. 1:11-12 The MESSAGE).

***Note: The masculine pronoun is used for purposes of simplicity. The committee is fully aware that women are equally included in all of the above.***