

## TRAINING ADVICE FOR ASPIRING MISSION PILOTS

In Exodus 25 and the following chapters, God lays out for Moses the blueprint for constructing the tabernacle and all that is to go into it. The plans are detailed and precise. Moses must have wondered how he was to complete the task given to him. However, in Exodus 31:2–3 God says to Moses, “See, I have called by name Bezaleel. ... I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship...”

As you consider your future, God may be calling and preparing you for a career in missionary aviation, filling you with His Spirit, wisdom, understanding, knowledge and in all manner of *airmanship* to further build His Church and accomplish the Great Commission! Mission aviation is a challenging, enjoyable and fulfilling career option. As you further your aeronautical training, the following suggestions from veteran missionary pilots will help you prepare for service with JAARS.

### General:

- **Learn to be disciplined.** Aviation is all about discipline, so to be a good mission pilot you must be a person of discipline. This should be demonstrated both inside and outside the cockpit. It is the foundation upon which you will build all your other skills, abilities, knowledge and judgment.
- **Be a person of character.** U.S. Senator Dan Coates said, “Character cannot be summoned at the moment of crisis if it has been squandered by years of compromise and rationalization. The only testing ground for the heroic is the mundane. The only preparation for that one profound decision, which can change a life or even a nation, is those hundreds of half-conscious, seemingly insignificant decisions made in private. Habit is the daily battleground of character.”
- **Be professional.** Remember that it takes at least as high a degree of professionalism to be a mission pilot as it does to be an airline pilot. Airline pilots fly in an environment that is significantly loaded in their favor—multi-crew cockpit, current and detailed weather reports, modern equipment in the airplane, and on-the-ground and regulations that help protect them and their passengers. Mission pilots fly in a far less structured environment, which requires an even higher degree of professionalism to operate safely. Seek to be professional, not just to pass the checkride. Passing the checkride means you have met the lowest common industry standard. Missions are looking for professional pilots who strive for excellence and aren’t just satisfied to get by with the minimums.
- **Be precise.** Although we realize no one is perfect, we’re looking for people who are always working toward perfection and are not content with staying 75’ high even though commercial tolerances may allow you to fly an altitude  $\pm 100'$ . Fly a chosen airspeed on downwind, base and final. Fly a stable approach. Push yourself to be precise, whether you are a student pilot or an ATP.
- **Maintain good situational awareness (SA) and practice good aeronautical decision making (ADM).** Know where you are, how much fuel you have onboard, the weather ahead, daylight remaining, options available, etc. Having good SA helps you exercise good judgment and make knowledgeable decisions.
- **Be the pilot in command (PIC).** Make the decisions pertinent to your flight. Instead of asking your instructor what altitude or heading to fly, if you are capable of making the decision, do it and communicate your plan to your instructor. Don’t make decisions based on what you think your instructor wants you to do. Take ownership of your training and your flying. Be the PIC.

**Specific:**

- [Redefining Airmanship](#) by Tony Kern is an excellent resource. Learning to apply the principles found there will help you become a better pilot.
- Learn to fly by outside visual reference. We're looking for VFR pilots who fly with their eyes outside the cockpit and do not depend primarily on instruments. The mission environment demands that you gather much of the information for flight from outside references, especially during approaches to short and/or sloped runways—pitch, bank, yaw, surface winds, and the ability to judge glide distances. If you fly well by outside reference, the numbers on the instruments will be right too. Develop a good VFR scan, and be sure to include the VSI in that scan.
- Know the weight and balance for your airplane. Calculate these with various loads so you get a feel for what the airplane can handle.
- Calculate your ground run and takeoff distances over a 50' obstacle and compare those numbers to what the airplane will actually do.
- Get in the habit of conducting appropriate and professional passenger briefings for every flight—even to your flight instructor. FAR 91.105, 91.107 and 91.519 may give you some direction in the development of a thorough briefing.
- Develop good habits. Taxi on the centerline. Take off on the centerline. Land on the centerline. Taxi back to the ramp on the centerline. Use smooth control inputs. Don't ride the brakes. Clear before you turn. Listen on the frequency. Make clear, concise and professional communications on the radio. Remember that practice makes permanent, so be sure to practice correctly.
- After runup, when ready for takeoff, give yourself a short pre-takeoff briefing that includes a review of runway conditions, wind, abort point, pertinent speeds to fly and emergency procedures for various points on the departure path.
- Develop good VFR cross-country navigation skills using dead reckoning (DR) and pilotage. Navigate chart-to-ground, not ground-to-chart. Learn to use DR properly and trust it. Push yourself to find and use the small details on the chart, without losing the big picture. It is essential to learn the foundations of VFR navigation well (DR and pilotage) and not just default to electronic navigation.
- Use control pressures instead of control movement to build smoothness into your flying. Learn to use your feet on the pedals to maintain smooth coordination. Develop a feel for proper coordination while comparing it with what you see outside. Verify with a quick glance at the ball, but don't look there first.
- Prior to landing, give yourself a pre-landing briefing. Like the pre-takeoff briefing, this allows you to consider the surface, winds, planned touchdown point, abort point, speeds for the approach and any other pertinent information.
- Develop the ability to critique yourself. The ability to self-assess enables you to make the most of your solo flying. Note what you did well, what you learned, what needs improvement and what you are going to change next time. Take good post-flight notes from your instructor too. Having information written down is more beneficial than relying on your memory.
- Get checked out in different types of aircraft. Each type of aircraft you fly has the potential to add a different facet to your aviation experience. Apply yourself with all diligence to your study of the POH and preparation for this transition.