

Some More Ways You can Support Missionaries

"You will do well to send them on their journey in a manner worthy of God. For they have gone out for the sake of the name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. Therefore we ought to support people like these, that we may be fellow workers for the truth." 3 John 6-7

The obvious ways to support missionaries is through our prayer and giving, but there are other ways we can use our personal gifts in sending and supporting missionaries.

Pete Sommers says *"We all want volunteer fundraisers, of course, but God gives us people with a mix of gifts instead: wisdom, service, prayer, hospitality, giving (cash and in-kind) and maybe exhortation. And we need them all. If you are headed overseas, you need someone to help with communications, to take your letter, get it formatted, stuffed, addressed and sent here in your home country. You need people with the gift of hospitality in cities where your donors are grouped, prayer warriors and perhaps someone with the time and knowledge to assist in getting visas. If you're building support in or near your place of ministry, you need a prayer groups, a communications assistant, hosts for events to promote your work or encourage your donors. You need an advisory group, formal or informal, beyond your organization."* Getting Sent p. 138.

Be a Local Church "Champion"

Be the one in your local church who keeps up-to-date on a missionary and his or her work – and keep your local church up-to-date as well. Keep in touch with them personally. Endeavor to learn as much about their field of ministry as you can. Frequently share specific prayer requests both orally and in church publications. Put together an attractive display on their ministry. Organize fund-raisers, or special projects. Make phone calls in behalf of your missionary to supporters thanking them for their involvement.

Getting Them Sent

Perhaps the greatest struggle a missionary has is getting to the field to begin with. This often involves many personal sacrifices, and sometimes years of preparation, travel and building a support base. So anything and everything you can do to assist them in this task is of great importance. "Speed them on their way" (Titus 3:13; Romans 10:14-15)

Hospitality

There are a number of ways you can support a missionary through hospitality. Hosting "events" – both large such as

banquets or conferences; but also small such as gathering people from your personal "networks" for small group breakfasts, desserts, teas, or prayer meetings where you introduce and increase interest and contacts for supporting the missionaries work. Or providing comfortable places for itinerating missionaries to stay while preparing to go to the field, or as they return and re-adjust to life back home. (Romans 15:24; 16:2; 1 Corinthians 16:5,6; 16:10.11)

Newsletters and Administrative work

Yes, mission boards do this—but it is a great help to have someone to assist in preparing attractive up-to-date prayer letters, or even a web site for a missionary. Or to assist in keeping contact lists up to date. And there are a host of other administrative tasks people at home can take on – check with your missionary or the mission board for ways you can help or things you might be able to do.

Communication

Once on the field and the new routine of their work sets in, missionaries feel isolated, out of touch. Letters, e-mail (observe the guidelines), phone calls, care packages, can do much to encourage them. Share things that matter, your thoughts and feelings – be realistic and honest – and encouraging. Show interest in their lives on the field, their concerns and what specifically you are praying for them. Encourage your children to connect with their children. Care packages could include even little things: packages of seasonings unavailable on the field, or new Christian books or music CD's, sermon or Bible study tapes etc. You might even visit them on the field, getting a first hand taste of life there; or facilitate a pastor or someone else in doing do. Best of all ask the missionary what you personally can do to encourage them and their families. And be sure to follow through! (Titus 3:15; 2 Timothy 3:10ff)

Logistics

Overseas ministry has many special needs. Material goods may need to be obtained, packed and properly shipped, duties paid, and often times even be shepherded along in order that they reach their destination in a timely manner. And a missionary's "affairs" and property at home may have been entrusted to the care of others. Someone may be needed to ensure that those commitments and promises of people at home are followed through and kept. Perhaps a short term team being send assist in the work needs help with planning, recruiting and a myriad of preparations. Missionaries need diligent, detail-orientated people with the knowledge at home that can both facilitate their ministries and free their minds of concern. (2Timothy 4:13)

Re-entry Support

The shock of coming home is frequently worse than that going to the field. Reverse culture shock, as it is called, results in stress, frustration and depression, made much worse because it is not expected. After even a brief time overseas, people return home to find “home” and its culture is no longer familiar to them – places, people, verbal expressions, and life-styles have gradually changed. They return excited about their cross cultural experiences, and find people quickly are bored, or have difficulty relating to their new “world” awareness. The missionary may critically view his own culture’s self-absorption through another culture’s eyes. The shock waves of coming home have kept many missionaries from ever returning to the field.

Be sensitive and aware! Do your best to grandly welcome them home – and be sure their immediate living and transportation needs are met, and help ease them into being “home.” While giving them opportunities to share their experiences, give them space to say “No.” Be patient, watch for the indications they may be struggling spiritually, mentally or emotionally to cope; and be someone they can open up to and talk through their spiritual or emotional ups and downs. Help them to slowly integrate their new identity and lifestyle into their new environment. Help them build new friendships and relationships and look for ways they can share their global perspective and experiences in your community. (Acts 14:27-28)

So take stock of your gifts and re-consider your role as a sender – neither your prayers nor your giving will suffer!

“We must either go out for the sake of his name, or we must send and support such people who do, and do so in a manner worthy of God. . . . The name of God is at stake in how we treat our missionaries. God is glorified when we support them substantially with our prayers, our money, our time, and in myriad other practical ways. God is not glorified when our missionaries are simply a name on the back of the church bulletin or a line item in the budget.”

Tom Steller, in Let the Nations be Glad by John Piper, p. 236.

Good books on supporting your missionaries are **Serving as Senders** and **The Reentry Team**, both by Neal Pirolo. Get them and share them.

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