



## Individuals Considering Adopting A Missionary

Hopefully you are seriously considering adopting a missionary. It is something that every believer should consider and commit to prayer.

Modern missions requires individuals to be more involved in the lives of missionaries than in the past. Years ago, the local church was the source for the majority of missionary support; that is just not true anymore. That is why we are emphatically encouraging individuals to Adopt A Missionary—missionaries need you to be involved in their lives, it's vital. Adoption—by definition suggests a level of commitment and an attitude of ownership. While missionaries are away you are part of their life line; they depend on you as a child might.

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Below are some helpful ideas to help you more effectively support an adopted missionary.

### Pray

Augustine said, "Without God, we cannot; but without us, God will not." Prayer transcends the dimensions of time and space and ushers us into the very throne room of God, worshipping, petitioning and interceding in that spiritual realm of the eternal now.

In his book [Serving As Senders](#), Neal Pirolo provides the prayer list below. You can also use the OMF suggestions found in the [Introduction](#).

- Adjusting to the new language, different foods, new customs, and difficult climate.
- Protection in travel, health, accidents, and dangerous situations
- Parents' concern for their children's health, schooling, friendships. Housing accommodations, lack of privacy, differences in living standards, and lack of accustomed conveniences.
- Loneliness, homesickness, lack of accustomed fellowship with others
- Interpersonal relationships, dealing with one's (and others') prejudice, selfishness, depending on the faithfulness of others to meet one's financial needs.
- Effectiveness in ministry, whatever the assignment.
- Functioning of the tools of ministry. (It is amazing how printing presses break down just when a completed New Testament is ready for printing!)
- Lack of visible results; the "plowing, planting and watering" stages can go on for years! (*Jeremiah preached for 23 years and no one listened. Jer 25:3*)
- The people being ministered to, the national Christians, the leaders of the country.
- Need for stability, wisdom, compassion, self-discipline, boldness, power, love, to be filled with the Spirit of God.

Other ideas to remind you to pray:

- Get a few prayer cards and put them in places where they will remind you to pray (In your Bible, on the fridge, in your car, etc...)
- Set an alarm on your clock or watch to remind you to pray daily at the same time.
- Set a clock in your house to the time of your missionary.
- Set the weather for your home page to your missionaries location

## Encourage and Communication

Technology has made the world much smaller; the days of receiving an out dated quarterly newsletter from a missionary are all but gone. Even in the remotest part of Africa a missionary can communicate daily via a satellite internet connection whether by e-mail or even using VOIP (telephone through the internet). The beauty of this is that prayer can be much timelier. Especially, if there is a medical emergency, accident, or an individual in a tribe that needs prayer, you can be there for them on the spot.



Communication by e-mail, snail mail, via the internet (blog, messenger/chat service, or VOIP) or telephones (International phone cards are often available and can really reduce the cost of communication) are all effective means readily available to you to offer encouragement to your missionary. A lot can change while missionaries are gone; communication helps them feel supported, cared for, and connected to the people, community, and life they left behind and less like orphans.

- Communication Recommendations:
  - I always say, "**Less is more.**" I encourage people to write more frequently and only a paragraph. Honestly, if there is too much of a narrative (you have written a novel) it often can become overwhelming and will it not be read. If you have a lot to say, consider sending two communications a couple days apart. On the other hand, I have had people tell me they don't write because, "I don't want overwhelm you...everyone is probably writing you."—**No, please write to me!!!**
    - Tell them about what is happening in your life.
      - What God has been teaching you recently or how the pastor's message has impacted you. Send a copy of pastor's message.
    - Write about hobbies or sports you share in common. (A couple of years ago I happened to look at Major League Baseball standings and was surprised to see a team called the Washington Nationals—who were they? Or being an avid mountain biker, I still have no clue about the latest equipment, bikes etc..)
      - Consider sending a magazine or maybe a subscription (News, Sports, People, church/Christian magazine...anything that might help them feel more connected)
      - I have a friend that gets a radio program sent to him daily via the internet to help him feel up to date on the latest news.
    - Send a short 1MB video clip of your family or family sporting event.
    - Pictures of things that have changed in the life they once knew...the little things you might take for granted. Like a new wing to the church, how your children have grown, or even the new uniform for the local professional sports team.
    - Send news paper clippings or forward news articles via e-mails.
    - News about current trends in society, religion, politics, etc...
    - Send a church bulletin.

- Send Christmas cards, even when they are late they are still nice to get. Ensure you have a current picture of the family. Also, wedding invitations are nice to receive even if they can't attend...it is nice to be remembered.
- Skype and Yahoo Messenger are other examples of means to use the internet to communicate with missionaries cheaply.
- Webcams will often work. I have talked to churches and Sunday Schools via a webcam.
- Remember communication should be two ways. Ask for prayer requests from them. What they might be interested in hearing about. Any material needs you can help with?
- **IMPORTANT COMMUNICATION NOTES:**
  - Most of all, the goal of communication should be about encouragement and letting them know they are not alone.
  - Some missionaries are in "closed countries" where Christians are not welcome. Find out from your church if this might be an issue with your missionary and any guidelines they have on communication with them.
- Consider visiting your missionary on the field. It will open your eyes to their world and better equip you to pray more specifically, while you are just being an encouragement to them.
- Sending a gift package is also a great form of encouragement. It blesses them and lets them know they are appreciated. See ideas for gift packages in the next section.

## Material Support

Prayerfully consider giving a regular amount every month to your adopted missionary on top of your regular tithes. It doesn't have to be a lot. \$25 or \$50 a month is the average amount that missionaries will receive from individuals. Think about it, 50 people at \$50 a month is \$2,500/month; the little amounts can add up quickly.

- Often, a missionary's finances can fluctuate up to 50% or more from their average support from one month to another. Imagine trying to manage an ever changing budget. Consider setting up a scheduled payment from your bank or direct deposit.
- If you do decide to give a monthly amount, consider giving your missionary a "raise" as you get raises. They have to deal with the rising costs of food, gas, and health care as you do. If you get a bonus or a large tax return, consider blessing them with a part of it.

### American Lifestyle:

- Americans spend as much on chewing gum in a year as they give to missions.
- Americans pay as much for pet food in 52 days as they spend on missions in 52 weeks.
- On one day, February 14<sup>th</sup>, Americans spend more money on gifts and cards than they do in the whole month to tell the lost and dying world God loves them!

Many missionaries are under-supported, so a little financial support can go a long way. Furthermore, in most situations, missionaries don't have any way in which to make up a financial shortfall. They just can't go and get a second job (Work permits are required and often hard to come by). Consequently, they must bear the entire burden of any shortfall. Having regular steady income is such a blessing.

Also as the Lord has blessed you, prayerfully consider helping meet a special or unexpected need such as medical care, transportation, equipment, or special projects. Offer to pay for a retreat, vacation, or summer camp for the kids. Send holiday and care packages containing money or needed items. Find out what favorite foodstuffs, healthcare products, or other supplies are not available in their country and send them periodically.

**Gift Packages:** It is always a blessing to receive something from "home." Often the little things are the BIG things—it doesn't have to be expensive. Here are some other ideas to bless a missionary on the field:

- Send DVD's, it is common for missionaries have DVD players. Many video rental stores sell good quality used movies for a very low price.
- iTunes gift cards. Allow a missionary to have access to your music and video purchases. Many missionaries can download TV shows (though it might take a Day to download on 500MB show).
- Send common food items from home like Cheetos, Doritos, Frosted Flakes, Captain Crunch, and Wheat Thins. Things you might take for granted. I have seen missionaries ration a bag of Doritos for a month, one chip a day to savor the flavor. These are comfort items that remind them of home.
- Find out what hobbies, sports, or activities you share in common. Help support them by providing supplies, parts, and equipment. Maybe the latest information or magazines.
- Send a current devotional or book that is having an impact on the church.
- Couple of generic hints:
  - When you send items there may be extra charges such as customs and duty, shipping, and other fees. Ask them about these so that your gift doesn't become a burden. I know a missionary who paid \$35 customs and duty for a \$5 pair of slippers for their child's birthday.
  - Don't forget transit time (sometimes 2-3 months) when considering birthdays, anniversaries, and Christmas.
  - Often you have to be forceful with missionaries; they don't like to put people out. Tell, don't ask, your missionaries that you are going to send a package and to ensure that you don't waste money and effort ask them for a list of what they want.
  - Often if an item looks valuable, it can get "lost" in the mail. Do what you can to make your packages and descriptions as inconspicuous as possible.
  - If you are sending something, work with your team to see if they might want to put a few items in too.



### **On Furlough:**

- Find out what your team is doing to encourage and welcome your missionary and offer to help.
- Gift certificates for movies and places to eat are always nice.
- Missionaries travel, consider purchasing them gas cards.
- Have the local newspaper delivered to their home.
- If you have a vacation condo or cabin, suggest your missionary take a vacation and use your place.
- Find out what hobbies or sports they like. Take them to a sporting event or on a trip related to their hobby. My daughter loves dogs and some friends took her to a dog show—she loved it.

- **IMPORTANT NOTES:**

- Again, missionaries don't want to be a burden. So don't say, "Call me if you need anything." Your missionary will probably never call. Be a little forward, make your offer specific. Example: "I would like to take your kids next Tuesday so you can go out." vs. "Let me know sometime when you would like to go out."
- Just because missionaries are back "home" doesn't mean they don't still need your financial support. Actually, because the cost of living is often higher they might need more help. Because of the short time of their stay back home and their visitation schedule, it is rare for missionaries to have an opportunity to find work to help cover their financial need.

## Join a Support Team

Adopting a missionary shouldn't be a solitary activity. In fact, we strongly recommend that you join a group of fellow believers that have adopted your missionary. Joining together with other believers can leverage the resources of those on your team to more effectively support your adopted missionary. Activities could include: sharing information, praying together, coordinate care packages, and being an advocate for your missionary. Find out from your church if there are groups or others in your church that support your missionary...if not can you start one?



## Be an Advocate

One of the most significant things we can do for your missionaries is to be their advocate. As you learn new information about your adopted missionary's life and work, share it with the people you naturally relate with. If something is important to you, it will often be important to your friends. Share your adopted missionary's prayer letters, updates, pictures, and e-mails.

- Encourage others to adopt your missionary
- If you move or change churches introduce people or the church to your missionary.
- Create a "missionary moment" where you can share about your missionary in a church group/class.
- Have your home fellowship or mens/womens group or team adopt your missionary.
- Have a Christian school grade/class adopt a child in the same grade. As they move up in school have the Adopted Missionary Child move up with the class.

## Resources

Consider reading Neal Pirollo in his book, *Serving As Senders*