



# How Do I Better Support Missionaries?

A resource for missions minded individuals and churches who have a **SERIOUS** desire to better support their missionaries.



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## PREFACE

My Wife and I are excited about your interest in supporting missionaries, whether as a church or individually.

This website grew from a personal desire to better connect those serving in the field with those sending. ***Adopt-A-Missionary.Info*** is our own personal endeavor inspired by our experiences as missionaries; we are not connected to any organization. Even though we no longer serve as missionaries, we still have a desire to reach the world for Christ. We have always felt that even if we could help just one missionary more effectively share the love of Jesus then this site will have served its purpose.

So to make a long story short, please feel free to shamelessly use anything on this site. If you have any questions please feel free to e-mail us at [info@adoptamissionary.info](mailto:info@adoptamissionary.info)

God Bless

**Michael**



## INTRODUCTION: *Adopt A Missionary?*

Well, missionaries aren't really orphans, but neither were we when we were adopted into the family of God (Gal 4:5). However, adoption is a beautiful word that helps describe the strong relationship that should be between missionaries and the churches, family, and friends that pray and support them. The church at Antioch, in a sense, adopted Paul and Barnabas as special messengers of the Gospel to Asia and Europe (Acts 13:1-3).

Most churches have sent or are supporting missionaries serving "at the ends of the earth." As nice as that is, our commitment to these people we have sent to save the lost should go well beyond just placing them on an airplane. We as the body of Christ need to be involved in their lives and work, it's vital. How can we as a Church ever effectively reach the ~50,000 people that die each day without EVER hearing about Jesus (that's ~18 million per year!), if we are all not doing our part? Supporting our missionaries is not a task for the mission's pastor, church staff or mission's team alone—it is something that every single believer should be involved in.

**Every believer should prayerfully consider personally adopting just one missionary.**

Therefore, every believer should prayerfully consider personally adopting at least one missionary who has been sent from or is supported by their home church. Most churches have many missionaries, and in some instances have missionaries that are waiting to leave that need your support. (Interesting Fact: There are about 40,000 people in the U.S. alone not able to go to the field due to lack of financial support...I always say, "The Laborers are Many but the Senders are Few.") To do your part, you can

**The *Laborers* are Many, But the *Senders* are Few.**

reach out to your pastoral staff, mission's director/pastor, or missions committee; they are great sources for information on adopting a missionary that would fit well with you and your family and your desire to reach a particular part of the world.

You will discover that adopting a missionary can be a very rewarding experience. It will open your life and the life of your family to a world that is completely unseen in your present context. Your daily life will be enriched while you become more directly involved in reaching the world for Jesus Christ.

### **How and Why Adopt a Missionary**

Much of the effectiveness of adopting a missionary truly depends on you taking the time to get to know the family or individual you are adopting. It is important to know and understand their ministry. If you adopt a small child, you don't assume you know all you need to know and then head down some predetermined path. You spend time getting to know this precious child, discovering who they are and how you can be a good parent given the child's unique identity—it must also be so with our adopted missionaries.



Consequently, taking the time to understand the missionaries that we adopt and are partnering with is paramount. First, we need to remember that missionaries are human beings just like each of us; they aren't "super" Christians. Missionaries struggle as we do with weak faith, limitations of the body, loneliness, and other longings of the heart. Often their family is far away and communication with friends and family is infrequent. The missionary life is often difficult. Our missionaries need to vitally experience God's nearness and His grace. This is not something that happens automatically when someone becomes a missionary any more than it happens automatically in your life. We need to expect that our missionaries will have struggles in their lives and regularly respond with understanding and encouragement.

## **Pray**

Prayer is the single most important element in any missionary's work. Missions is more than missionaries serving God. Missions is God at work! If God isn't at the heart of the work, then nothing eternal is accomplished. Prayer is therefore the lifeblood of missions. By praying for our missionaries, their work, and the people they are serving, as well as their personal needs and struggles, we recognize that God is at the center of the work. Missionaries covet your prayers more than anything else you can do for them.

## **Encourage and Communicate**

We wouldn't speak to our children every year or two, or wait to hear an update from the pulpit on how they were doing in Sunday school. For the same reason we need to personally communicate and encourage our adopted missionaries. 1st Thes 5:11 exhorts us to "Encourage one another and build each other up." Our missionaries often feel completely disconnected from the life, churches, people, and the community they left. A lot can change at home while missionaries are on the field so communicating with them reduces the feeling of being homesick or being left out. Personal communication helps the missionary feel supported, connected, and cared for. Communication can be done by e-mail, letters, or even the telephone. We encourage you to maintain regular contact with your adopted missionary.

## **Material Support**

Did you know that the average support cost for a missionary from North America is a little over \$6,000/month? However, support needs range from as low as \$2,000/mo to as high as \$12,000/mo. Factors which influence this variation include: the cost of living in the country of service, family size, choice/method of schooling for children, the existence of retirement funds, organization overhead, ministry expenses, travel, vehicle expenses, and start up costs.

It seems to be a little known fact, but most missionaries get the vast majority of their financial support from individuals and NOT from churches or other organizations. Therefore, it is incumbent on individuals to come behind missionaries for regular financial support on a monthly basis in order for them to go, or stay on the field. The amount individuals give missionaries is usually between \$25 and \$50 per month.

## **Seven Ways to Pray for our Missionaries**

OMF International has a wonderful flier entitled *7 Ways to Pray for Your Missionaries* which suggests praying daily, rotating through key issues:

### **1. Relationship with God:**

- Loving and studying God's Word
- Strong prayer life
- Walking in the Holy Spirit

### **2. Physical/Emotional:**

- Adaption to climate
- Health
- Safety in danger
- Victory over loneliness and depression

### **3. Family Relationships:**

- Husband/wife
- Children/parent
- Family life as a model to nationals
- Coping with singleness

### **4. Ability to Communicate:**

- Language Study
- Continual improvement in fluency
- Cultural adaptation and understanding

### **5. Effective Ministry:**

- Teaching, preaching, witnessing
- Boldness, open doors
- Prepared hearts, fruitfulness

### **6. Team Relationships:**

- Other missionaries
- Nationals

### **7. Country of Service:**

- Government- national and local
- Political situation
- Visas, continued open door
- Outreach to city, village, tribes
- Help them feel connected

Having a regular steady income, even in small amounts helps them budget and gives a missionary a sense of financial security. This helps them focus on the work God has called them to and not on finances. We encourage everyone who has adopted a missionary to prayerfully consider committing to give a regular monthly amount to their adopted missionary on top of their regular tithes and offerings to their local church.

**Most missionaries get the vast majority of their financial support from *individuals* and NOT from churches.**

### **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 or starting one if none exists. Joining together 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, logistics and re-entry support, and being an advocate for your missionary.

### **Be an Advocate**

Remember missionaries are often half way around the world and therefore often forgotten. One of the most significant things we can do for our missionaries is to be their advocate. As you learn new information about your adopted missionary's life and work, share it with others you naturally relate with. Most of us, when we finish a really great book, hear a new song, or see a good movie tell our friends about it. In the same way, as prayers are being answered or important events occur in our missionary's life, share it with your friends. If something is important to you, it will often be important to your friends. "Introduce" your adopted missionary to your friends and share with them their prayer letters, updates, pictures, and e-mails—encourage others to adopt them.

### **Conclusion**

Like adopting a child, sending a missionary to the field isn't something that is "done" and then over with. As it is with any adoption, the adoptive parents invest in the life, growth, and development of the child. In the same way, the adopted missionaries should have the same care and investment. Missionaries need to be encouraged and built up regularly. We encourage everyone to prayerfully consider personally adopting a missionary from their home church and invest in them through support, prayer, finances and though a personal relationship of encouragement through communication. Though all are not called to leave their homeland and go to another, we are all called to be co-laborers and to be involved in the Great Commission to reach souls for Christ (Matt 28:19-20, Acts 1:8).

**Contact your local church office today and ask them about finding a missionary you can adopt!**

This booklet is a download of the [www.adoptamissionary.info](http://www.adoptamissionary.info) website. Below is a summary of the chapters contained in this booklet.

- [Individuals](#): Individuals Considering Adopting A Missionary
- [Teams](#): Running Effective Support Teams
- [Churches](#): Churches Wishing to Facilitate an Adoption A Missionary Program
- [Missionaries](#): Being A Effective Adopted Missionary
- [Reentry](#): Providing Essential Reentry Support
- [Resources](#): Other Mission Resources



## 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.

**Modern missions requires *individuals* to be more involved in the lives of missionaries than in the past.**

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, worshiping, 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*



## Running Effective Support Team

Church is about fellowship and community. Likewise, Adopting A Missionary should not be a solitary activity. Consequently, we strongly recommend that groups or teams adopt missionaries. Bible study groups and Sunday school classes can be effective at praying, encouraging, and supporting missionaries. However, we have found that support teams that are made up of people who have made individual commitments to Adopt A Missionary and then come together as a team are much more effective.

### Pray

Samuel Chadwick said, "The only concern of the devil is to keep Christians from praying. He fears nothing from prayerless studies, prayerless work, and prayerless religion. He laughs at our toil, mocks at our wisdom, but trembles when **we** pray." Prayer is where the action is—supporting and sustaining those on the fields of the world. God is a God of community and calls us to corporate prayer; "where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them" Matt 18:20. Effective teams pray together.

Support teams that are made up of people who have made individual commitments to Adopt A Missionary and then come together as a team are much more effective.

As a team you can use the OMF prayer suggestions found in the Introduction.

### Encourage and Communicate

We wouldn't invite our children over for a family dinner every year or two, or wait to hear an up date from the pulpit on how they were doing in Sunday school. Because missionaries are so far away, it is even more important to do our best to make them feel like they are still part of the family. Therefore, we need to communicate and encourage our adopted missionaries not only as individuals but also as a team. We are exhorted in 1 Thes 5:11 to "Encourage one another and build each other up." As a team we can more effectively support our missionaries than we can alone. We can leverage our communication, support, prayer, and material support.

Come up with creative ways you can show your missionaries they are still part of the family. Send them a little card signed by the group saying you were praying for them, set a time for the group to talk with them on the phone or chat over the internet, or send a care package from the team—as a team you can leverage the gifts of everyone to really bless your missionary.

When your missionaries are home on furlough, have them over for a team dinner. Ask them to share about what is going on in their lives and have them tell some stories. Doing something special for them soon after they arrive is always a HUGE encouragement—it communicates you really do care and that they were important to you.

Below are some special things you can do as a team soon after your missionaries arrive from the field to demonstrate encouragement and show your love to them.

- Ensure your missionaries have a good place to stay that will be refreshing.
- Help them get a car to borrow.
- Offer to pick them up at the airport or just meet them there; make them feel special and appreciated with flowers, balloons, and/or banners.
- When they arrive, they will most likely be tired from the trip; ensure they have a quiet place to recover and rest.
- Plan some meals for them; however, you might want to find out what their plans are first.
- Have some gift certificates for meals in town so they don't have to cook. Fast food gifts certificates are great—it is quite common for them to be craving a simple American made hamburger...You remember the “Big Mac Attack?”
- Create a welcome basket. Write them a note encouraging them, have gifts, toys, or games for the children (games and toys they can play during their stay) to keep them entertained and out of mother's hair.
- Decorate the place—make a big deal about their return, make them feel welcome. While decorating, inspect the house to ensure they have all they need (like enough beds, towels, toiletries, dish wash soap, etc...)
  - If it is Christmas, decorate the house accordingly and put up a Christmas tree, maybe put some gifts underneath the tree.
- Stock the place they are staying in with basic foodstuff (pre-package foods like Easy Mac and pizza pockets for children are HUGE).
- Things change, update them on the changes that have occurred, new places to shop, supply them with a current map, and any laws that might have changed that they should be aware of (car seat laws, cell phone laws, speed limits, etc...).
- **IMPORTANT:**
  - Missionaries need to a time to report what God has been doing in their ministry. At the very least schedule a time for them to share with your team, but if you can get a larger audience for them to share with that would be a HUGE encouragement. It helps them feel like the work they are doing for the Lord is noticed and appreciated. Having a missionary report has a biblical precedence; when Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch and Jerusalem for their first *home assignment* (Acts 14:27 and 15:4), each church gathered together and heard a report on all that God had done through them.



## Material Support

The lack of financial support can weigh heavy on a missionary family. Especially, when special needs come up that require immediate attention. Examples could be: surgery, flight home because of a death in the family, school fees, or a car accident. Leveraging a team's resources can be very effective at meeting immediate the one time needs of your missionary.

Other ways to leverage the team's resources:

On the field:

- Teams can be very effective in covering care packages, birthdays, anniversaries, and special events.

- Nothing excites kids more than receiving a box from back home. Consider giving a package every quarter. It doesn't have to cost a lot; snacks and other "comfort items" are just perfect. Leveraging your team and the church can really spread the costs around.
- Don't forget travel time for gifts such as Christmas; sometimes it can take up to 4-6 months for a package to arrive. Better to be early vs. late. However, late is better than nothing—it is quite common for missionaries to be receiving Christmas packages in April.
- Don't forget about customs, duty, and other fees that missionaries might have to pay for their gift.
- Do your missionaries need any school supplies? Remember many missionary kids (MK's) are home schooled so new curriculum is needed every year. Other items: Calculators (graphing), software (encyclopedia and other reference materials), books, pens, pencils, staplers, scissors, and backpacks.
- Some missionaries are shy about sharing their needs often—ask them directly (“I am going to send you school supplies so I would rather get what you want rather than what you don't)

Bless you missionaries on furlough—remember the cost of living back home is often higher than in the field. Their money will not go as far as it normally does:

- Give them some gifts certificates for the local grocery store. If they are on an extended furlough, consider doing this a few times.
- Missionaries travel, consider purchasing them gas cards.
- Often missionaries will not carry a lot of clothes while they are traveling or were planning to update their wardrobe while back in the U.S. Consider giving them gift certificates for the local department or clothing store.
- Offer to host their children while your missionaries go out on a date.
- Do you know someone with a time-share they can use?
- Are there any activities your missionaries might enjoy?
  - A trip to the local amusement park?
  - Get them some sporting equipment. (People have always blessed me with a mountain bike while on furlough.)
  - Tickets to a professional sporting event?
  - Take them ice skating...some MK's have never seen a rink.
- Passing through: Many missionaries are just passing through your area to visit churches, friends, family and friends.
  - Offer them a place to stay to avoid paying for a motel/hotel.
    - Offer to let them use your laundry facilities.
    - Make a lunch for the road.

### Support Team Activities

Working with others to support your Adopted Missionary, sharing information, and praying together is vitally important. This can be done in a number of ways.

- Set aside a few minutes each time your bible study, class, or group meets to hear any new updates about your adopted missionary and pray for them.
- Set up a special meeting/party and pray for them, call them on the phone.



In his book, [Serving as Senders](#), Neal Pirolo suggest that every missionary **MUST** have a support team to cover the following:

- Identifying the cross-cultural workers in your fellowship.
- Maintaining accountability in ministry.
- Confirming and encouraging spiritual growth (Before they go, on the field, and when they return.)
- Managing business affairs. (Money, Taxes, Health, and Death)
- Attending to personal details. (Material goods, material goods, family matters, ministry needs)
- [Re-entry](#) (*We have a separate chapter just for this subject!!*)

**If you are serious about being an effective support team, we strongly suggest that you read this book. Chapters 4 (Logistics) and 7 (Re-entry) are especially important for teams.**

### **Be an Advocate**

- Special needs will arise for your missionary; mobilize your team and church to meet this need.
- Invite others to join your team and adopt your missionary.
- Get the word out.
  - Ensure your missionary is on the church website. Is it current?
  - Is there a location for prayer cards or news letters in your church? Is it current? Are prayer cards available? If not, ask to have a location set aside for your missionary.

### **Resources**

- Neal Pirolo, *Serving As Senders*. You can get it from [www.eri.org/publications.htm](http://www.eri.org/publications.htm) (it is also available in Spanish and about 20 other languages).



## Churches Wishing to Facilitate an Adoption Program

The primary focus of a good Adopt A Missionary Program is to encourage individual ownership and coordinated support of missionaries the church sponsors to advance the kingdom of God overseas. Often churches support a large number of missionaries but individuals in the church have little relationship with them; the church staff and a few volunteers bear the burden of most of the work in supporting their missionaries. Often churches have so many missionaries they cannot effectively support them all—there is no relationship or the church's support ends up being a little more than just putting a check in the mail once a month. Introducing an Adopt A Missionary program pushes the task of much of the support of missionaries down to the individual and team level. Consequently, the number of people directly involved in supporting your missionaries is increased.



Maybe your church is small or can't afford a missions program. The Adopt A Missionary program, if done correctly, can help your church become more involved in missions with out much impact on the church's bottom line.

### Results of an Effective Adopt A Missionary Program:

- Personal relationships with active sponsored missionaries
- Strengthened commitment to missions
- Heighten awareness of mission opportunities
- Fresh ministry perspective due to outward focus
- Group building/bonding through the service of others
- Opportunity to see God at work in a world far different than our own

## Pray

Prayer is your missionaries' number one need. Ephesians 6:18 exhorts us to, "Always keep on praying for all the saints." The primary job of the local church is to ensure people are praying—your church should pray corporately for your missionaries. Below are some suggestions to help your congregation pray more effectively or you can use the OMF prayer suggestions found in the *Introduction*.

- Forward your missionary's updates out to your whole church staff and those who want the updates.
  - Hold your missionaries accountable; ensure they are sending updates and prayer requests out.
- Ensure there is an ample supply of CURRENT prayer cards available to your church members.
- Create a location where missionary updates can be found. A place where current newsletters, e-mails, pictures, and other current items and information are posted.

- Set time aside in your services to share prayer requests for your missionaries, maybe put an insert in the bulletin.
- Follow up with small groups and teams to encourage them to pray regularly.

## Encourage and Communicate

Remember, only about 50% of all long term missionaries complete their first term of commitment. Consequently, communication and encouragement is vital.

Staff and church members responsible for missionary care, almost need to be the encouragement police; they need to monitor communication from the missionary and from the body. They need to ensure that the missionary is receiving the care they need. Whether it is something as simple as ensuring e-mail communication and updates are occurring to ensuring a place is prepared for your missionaries when they return and they are going to be welcomed.

**Staff and church members responsible for missionary care, almost need to be the encouragement police.**

- Consider having a "commissioning ceremony," make a big deal about sending off your missionaries. This "officially" lets the church body know that you are behind them. This provides a tremendous amount of moral support and encouragement.
- Communication is so important.
  - Regularly encourage people in your church to communicate with their missionaries.
  - Tell your missionaries when the church mentions and prays for them.
  - If any communication goes out to the church about your missionary, ensure your missionaries also get a copy.
  - Some missionaries are awful at communication. Hold the missionaries your church sponsors accountable. Remind them that two way communication is paramount in encouraging others to pray for them and to maintain regular financial support.
- Organize a trip to visit your missionary. Try to get someone from the church to visit them at least every other year.
- **IMPORTANT:** One of the biggest things a church can do for a missionary is to give them the opportunity to report what God has been doing in their ministry. Give your missionaries some time in a service for them to share. It helps them feel like the work they are doing for the Lord is noticed, appreciated and important. It also lets the church body know about the investment they have made. At the end of Paul's missionary journey it was a common practice for him to report to the entire church all that the Lord had done. (Acts 14:27, 15:4, and 21:19)

## Material Support

Educating your local church body about the material needs of your missionaries is essential. Unfortunately, most churches are very passive in this area. Missionaries, and potential missionaries, often feel like they have been left out on a limb to fend for themselves, especially when even a little help from the pulpit would go such a long way. Encouraging people to become laborers for the harvest (*Mt 9:37*) but not providing a means to get there is like evangelism without discipleship.

Once we had a church of about 200 people faithfully give our family \$1000/month just because the pastor stood up and challenged the body to adopt us and take some ownership. Think about how much financial support even a small church could raise to help a missionary. Just twenty families at \$25/mo would mean \$500/mo for an adopted missionary.

On the other hand, many churches might be in a situation where it is not fiscally responsible to support a missionary financially or put them up for adoption to the body. This is o.k.—adoption is not about finances it is about a relationship. If your church is in this situation, you might still offer to support this missionary in prayer and encouragement. This also gives your church the opportunity to "test drive" the missionary.

Later when your church is in a position to financially support a missionary you potentially already know the character of a possible candidate to support. Often I have had churches even refuse to talk to us just because they can't support us financially. There are times where churches are supporting too many missionaries, but if this is not the case, adopt a missionary without any financial commitment anyway. You will all be blessed.

**Encouraging people to become laborers for the harvest (Mt 9:37) but not providing a means to get there is like evangelism without discipleship.**

- Consider not financially supporting missionaries at all at the church level on a monthly basis. I say this because often people assume since the church is doing something they don't have to do anything—they abdicate their ownership. Instead, encourage individuals in the body to provide monthly support for a missionary on top of their regular tithes.
- However, the church is better able to provide for one time events than a team or an individual such as:
  - Furlough:
    - Print up a new set of prayer cards for them. If needed set up an appointment with a professional photographer.
    - Car(s): In our commuter world cars on furlough are essential. Having transportation available for missionaries on furlough or even putting the word out to the body is a HUGE blessing.
    - Housing: Many churches have "missions houses." Do what you can to provide accommodations while your missionaries are on furlough.
    - School: Most missionary kids (MK's) have lived lives completely sheltered from our US culture...especially teenagers. Consider helping with Christian school tuition. This will help them settle back into this culture and be a blessing to the school to have MK's on campus.
    - Travel: Depending on the size of the family and the distance traveled, round trip tickets for a family to can cost up to \$7,000-\$10,000.
    - Put the word out to professionals in your church who might be able to provide services for free to missionaries. Often they would love the opportunity to bless them. (Options include: Doctors, dentists, photographer, lawyers (wills/power of attorney), computer and website help, mechanics, and tutors.)
  - On the Field:
    - Medical Crisis/Accident: Missionaries rarely have any reserves, living from month to month on faith. Helping out during a crisis can be a HUGE encouragement.
    - Often cars can cost 50% more than they do in the US. Most missionaries drive cars 7-10 years old or older. Helping them get into a good vehicle would be a HUGE blessing.
    - Is there a way the church could be involved in the ministry? Send Bibles, reference materials, help with a building project or purchase of equipment. Just asking would be a huge encouragement.
- Remind the body that often support will drop off on furlough, but because the cost of living is higher in the U.S. missionaries can actually struggle financially worse while back here.
- Annually let the body know that just as inflation goes up in the US it does overseas. Those who adopt should consider increasing their monthly giving when God has blessed them with a regular increase.
- Many missionary families with large mission organizations have to raise between \$6,000 and \$9,000 depending on the size of their family and where they live. Find out their needs and see what the church could do to help raise these funds through the Adopt A Missionary Program. For many, furlough is just one long fund raising campaign instead of much needed rest—help your adopted missionaries rest while they are back "home."

## Support Team

It is should the policy of your church for all your missionaries to have a support team in place prior to departure. As Neal Pirolo suggests in his book *Serving as Senders*, the following items need to be covered by individuals from the home church.

- Identifying the cross-cultural workers in your fellowship.
- Maintaining accountability in ministry.
- Confirming and encouraging spiritual growth (Before they go, on the field, and when they return.)
- Managing business affairs. (Money, Taxes, Health, and Death)
- Attending to personal details. (Material goods, family matters, ministry needs)
- [Re-entry](#) (*We have a separate chapter just for this subject!!*)

If this becomes your church's policy, ensure members of the church are aware of it. If any of these needs are not covered, help your missionary out by making the body aware of the need. (Example: "As you are all aware that our church requires our missionaries to have a support team, the Smith family is in need of someone to cover some of their business affairs. Please prayerfully consider meeting this need.)

Other ideas:

- Facilitate and encourage the meetings of those who have adopted the same missionary. Know who the team leader is and provide support and encouragement as needed. If there is not a team leader, try to find one.
- Encourage teams to remember and celebrate key dates, such as Christmas, birthdays, anniversaries, etc...
  - Don't forget travel time for gifts such as Christmas; sometimes it can take up to six months for a package to arrive. Better to be early vs. late.
- Ask support teams how you can make them more effective. Remind them that you are there for them.



## Be an Advocate

- Encourage every individual, family, or small group in your local church to adopt at least one missionary that your church sponsors.
- Remind those who have Adopted A Missionary to join a team that supports their missionary and get involved.
- Create a website/webpages that facilitates individuals to Adopt Missionaries. McLean Bible Church has done a good job of this. Check out our website for the link.



## Being An Effective Adopted Missionary

As in all adoptions, the children have responsibilities also. Likewise, adopted missionaries have responsibilities to their supporters—it takes two to have a good relationship. Below are a few helpful hints to be an effective at being an Adopted Missionary.

### Prayer

The prayers of your supporters and those they touch is your most important asset. Without prayer you might as well go home. Though at times it can be frustrating having to raise support, the first time you go through a crises you will feel the difference. With improvements in technology, prayer can be timelier than ever in the history of missions. When my wife and I got car carjacked, my son had a seizure, and when a pastor in a remote church took a second wife and our missionary friend had to confront him, an e-mail went out immediately and within minutes the encouraging e-mails literally from the other side of the world were coming back saying they were praying. I have other friends in Africa who are with organizations that essentially hire them—no support raising, but they don't have the same amount of prayer support; personally, I would rather have a little financial difficulties and the prayers.



Pray for your supporters as they let their needs known to you; make sure you let them know you have been praying.

### Encouragement and Communication

First, always try to have a spirit of thankfulness in your letters. Paul always emphasized this to his supporters in his letters (Examples Eph 5:20, Col 4:2, 3:17, 1 Thes. 2:13a, 5:16-18) Thank your supporters for their involvement in your ministry. Ensure that they understand that their support and prayers are an integral to your success in "our ministry."

Second, one of the most effective ways to receive encouragement and communication is to communicate yourself. You are responsible to communicate with your supporters (both churches and individuals), especially since they are investing their time, money, and prayers in you. Furthermore, the number one complaint I hear about missionaries is their lack of communication; many missionaries have had their prayer and financial support cut off simple because of a lack of communication.

In this day and age, the burden of having to sit down and write a quarterly newsletter is almost gone (though newsletters can be effective, especially for those few who are not on the internet); today, the best way to communicate is e-mail. **Make a goal to communicate AT LEAST once a month at the very least!!!** Below are a couple of guidelines for effective communication through e-mail.

- **Less is more! Don't send novels.** Try to keep your e-mails to no more than a couple of paragraphs. When people see a long e-mail more often than not they will just skip it for later (missed opportunity for timely prayer.)
  - If you have a lot to say, consider breaking your information up into two or more e-mails and send them a few days apart. This will also keep you on the top of their minds longer.
- Send a few pictures to support your topic.
- Little things can be the big things.
  - Just little note on prayer needs, praises, or answered prayer; a couple of sentences are all you need.
  - A short ministry update, again just a couple of sentences on salvations, work completed, or blessings.
  - If you notice a cultural difference that people might find interesting send a quick bullet on it. People always find this interesting.
  - If there is a birthday or special family event send a little update.
  - Share the needs you see, yours and others. You will be surprised.
    - Through just making a need known we have received thousands of dollars to meet that need.
    - God can bless others. On numerous occasions, people who read our e-mails and pray for us but don't financially support us, have blessed others because they have felt moved by something we shared about another person's need.
- **You Must Have** a digital camera and video camera; many are both. Remember a picture (or video) is worth a thousand words!
- Invest in communication and the internet. Do what you can to have easy access to the internet. Even in the middle of nowhere satellite links are often available at reasonable prices.
- Send a short 1MB video (approximately one minute video). Most digital cameras have the capability to take video also.
- Since so few don't have e-mail, see if you can have a supporter cut and paste your e-mail updates on a Word document and have them send it out to them.

## Raising Material Support

So you have to raise financial support. Raising material support is often the most frustrating thing for missionaries. We have all been there. Fortunately, it is God who ultimately has to raise the funds, but below are a few ideas that might help.

- Start with your family, friends, and their churches. Ask anyone you can to be your advocate to help you get in from of the right people. Having a reference is much better than just going to a church with no relationship at all.
- Cold calls are never fun, but most churches will be nice and supportive. Many will even pray with you, even if they have no intentions of supporting you.



## Resources and Raising A Support Team

Raising a support team is a must. Going without one would be missionary suicide. About 50% of all missionaries don't make it through their first term. Having a good team behind you is all but required. Just as in the military, you will probably need ten or more people actively behind you; this is the ratio of infantry men to support personnel in the U.S. military...this ration is probably true for God's army.

- Every missionary trying to raise support must read the following books:
  - Betty J. Barnett, *Friend Raising: Building a Missionary Support Team That Lasts*. It is available from Christian Book Distributors ([www.christianbook.com](http://www.christianbook.com))

Neal Pirola, [Serving As Senders](#). You can get it from [www.eri.org/publications.htm](http://www.eri.org/publications.htm) (it is also available in Spanish and about 20 other languages).



## Re-entry Support

"Re-entry" what is that? And why do you have a whole page dedicated to just this one subject?

Re-entry is the word used to describe the *stress and affects* of that a missionary experiences when he or she returns to the culture, surroundings, and people that they originally left behind. Returning "home" is usually has a more devastating effect on a missionary that the initial culture shock of going in the first place. More Christians end up backsliding as a result of re-entry than any other aspect of being a missionary. That is why this subject cannot be ignored.

**More Christians end up backsliding as a result of re-entry than any other aspect of being a missionary.**

There are many things that contribute to this "reverse culture shock." Infrastructure has changed, family has changed, businesses have changed, churches have changed, and oddly enough the missionary has probably changed the most but it is the least recognized. Everyone (the missionary, their family, and their church) all just think they will slip right into their old life...just fit in—they didn't have a problem before...this is "home." The missionary now has a totally different perspective on what is important than those around them; they just don't relate anymore. And in most cases, people are much too busy to take the time to really understand them.

Needless to say, the longer they were missionaries, the greater the difficulty they will have returning home. However, even short-term missionaries can experience re-entry issues.

### Pray

Often when our missionaries are "home" it can be natural to not pray for them as much as you would while they are in the field. However, as mentioned, this is a very critical and stressful time for your missionaries. When you are pray for them at home, please keep these thoughts in mind.

- They left all to obey the call—they really lived the reality of being a pilgrim.
- They have become bi-cultural. In most cases they are returning from a very relational culture where people always had time for them to a more non-relational, task orientated, individualistic, and utilitarian lifestyle.
- They lived among people who probably didn't have the things they have at "home." There the people around them didn't have regular running water or electricity (if at all) and were struggling just to put a meal on the table, and at "home" these *luxuries* are taken for granted and people are worried about what color the carpet should be.
- They have learned to be a good listener, which is great for success there but here they end up never sharing about what God while they were missionaries has done because they always let others share first.

## Resources

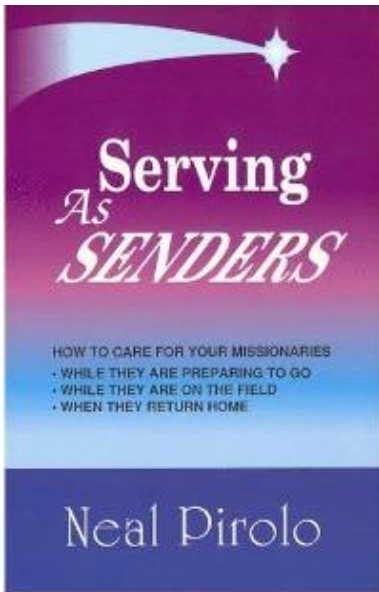
- Neal Pirolo, *The Re-entry Team*. You can get it from [www.eri.org/publications.htm](http://www.eri.org/publications.htm)
- Peter Jordan, *Re-entry: Making the Transition from Missions to Life at Home*. Available from: [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)
- Paula Cowman, *Renetry: Are You Ready for the Shock of Your Life?* (An article for women) Available on [www.adoptamissionary.info](http://www.adoptamissionary.info)



## Resources Related to the Adoption of Missionaries

### Books:

Generic Adopt A Missionary Support Resources:

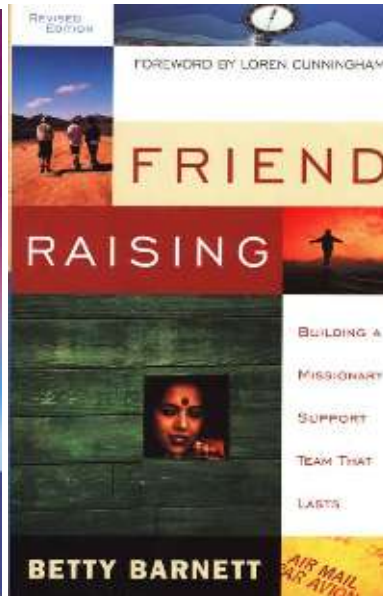


**Serving As Senders,**

**Neal Pirolo**

*(Available in about 20 languages)*

Available from  
[www.eri.org/publications.htm](http://www.eri.org/publications.htm)

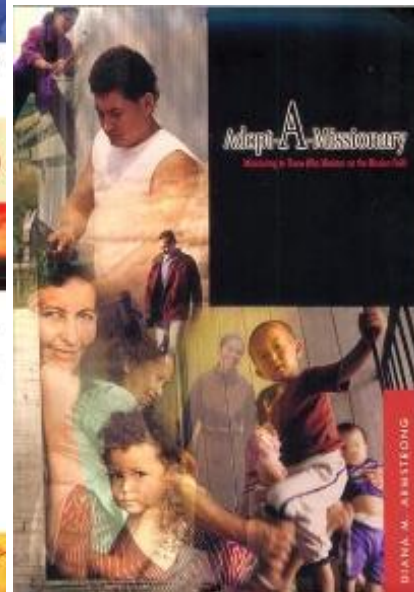


**Friend Raising:**

**Building a Missionary Support..Team That Lasts.**

**Betty J. Barnett**

Available from CBD  
[www.christianbook.com](http://www.christianbook.com)

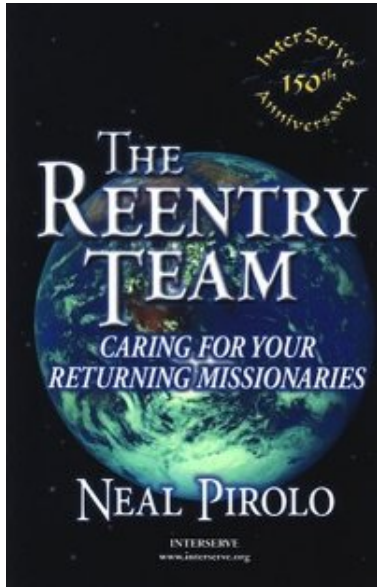


**Adopt A Missionary,**

**Diana M. Armstrong**

Available from  
[www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)

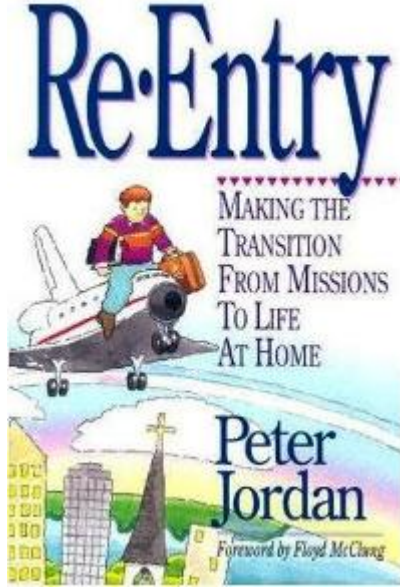
**Re-entry Support Resources:**



**The Reentry Team,**

**Neal Pirolo**

Available from  
[www.eri.org/publications.htm](http://www.eri.org/publications.htm)



**Re-Entry,**

**Peter Jordan**

Available from...  
[www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)



**Re-Entry (for Women),**

**Paula Cowman**

Available on  
[www.adoptamissionary.info](http://www.adoptamissionary.info)

**Websites:**

Examples of well done church mission programs on the web:

[Bel Air Presbyterian \(Home Teams Form\)](http://www.belairpres.org/default.aspx?page=500193): <http://www.belairpres.org/default.aspx?page=500193>

[Grace Chapel](http://www.grace.org/article15977.htm): [www.grace.org/article15977.htm](http://www.grace.org/article15977.htm)

[McLean Bible Church \(A Great Example\)](http://blog.mcleanbible.org/missions/): <http://blog.mcleanbible.org/missions/>

[Xenos Christian Fellowship \(Home Support Groups\)](http://www.xenos.org/ministries/missions/hsupport.htm): [www.xenos.org/ministries/missions/hsupport.htm](http://www.xenos.org/ministries/missions/hsupport.htm)