



Questions for Monthly Calls with Missionaries

Sending Church Element #12 - Providing Ongoing Care

By Mike Easton

Technology has allowed modern sending churches to be more directly involved with missionaries sent from their church than in centuries past. Early 19th century missionaries packed their belongings in coffins and received letters sent by ships over months.

When some of the first missionaries were sent from our church in the 80s, they could do a phone call, but it was around a dollar a minute. In order to be able to communicate a little more, missionaries would send microtapes back and forth. Fax machines and email made it even easier. When I went on my first mid-term trip in 2006, audio Skype allowed me to talk to my then girlfriend (now wife). With high speed internet, cameras built into laptops, smart phones, and messaging apps, the opportunities for sending churches to connect with their missionaries is historically unprecedented.

Technology makes being an involved and caring sending church more accessible than ever. But even though we can talk directly to our missionaries, what do we say that's help? What questions can we ask that make them feel loved, heard, and open up their hearts to what God would want to do? In this article we're going to dive into some guidelines and questions to ask missionaries sent from your church on a regular basis.

Who should have regular calls with the missionary?

As a missions leader you will need to start by deciding who from your church and how often you want them interacting with your missionaries. While it is always valuable to the missionary for the church's missions leader to connect with the missionary directly, this may not be a realistic expectation for the church's missions leader. It also may be a part of your vision to empower members of your church in care for missionaries. If you're considering the latter, check out: "[Establishing Advocacy Teams](#)" for more on how to do this work of care through your body.

You may also need to consider with different missionaries, what have you committed to as a church with that missionary. If you're looking at a more strategic approach to sending, you want to not only consider how much funding you are giving to a missionary, but how much time as well.

How often should these be?

This really varies on the need of the missionary and what you want to commit to from the church. Monthly is really helpful and desired by most missionaries. Every other month or quarterly is also possible. Anything beyond this and the missionary is likely to feel disconnected.

One practical tip, set the calls up through a repeating electronic calendar invite with Google, Outlook, or whatever else you might use. Scheduling can be one of the most difficult parts of regularly calling missionaries. Get it in the books. Move it if necessary, but getting it on the calendar in a repeating manner fixes most scheduling issues. Getting it on the calendar gives it some prominence. Rather than finding a spot in your busy life that works together, schedule your life around that important video call.

What is the purpose of these calls?

Generally speaking, the regular sending church calls have the goals of:

1. Keeping Connection - missionaries want to feel a connection to their church. 80 to 90% of that can be done by just showing up to the regular calls with missionaries.
2. Listening - Let them talk. For some it may be one of the few opportunities they have to speak in English everyday!
3. Asking Good Questions - Ask questions that get to the heart of the matter.
4. Praying - The need to feel like we accomplished something is great in all of us. Eternally speaking, if you get the opportunity to listen and hear of the missionary's needs and then turn them over to God in prayer, with them listening, haven't you done the most important work?

While advice giving could probably be one of the points above, I intentionally did not add it to make a point. Missionaries want to be heard and they want to have their thoughts and hearts provoked and challenged. Advice giving is great and it has its place. Work, in these calls, to talk as little as possible. For more on asking good questions and listening, check out: [Microskills for Advocates](#).

What are some good questions to ask?

The following questions were written by one of our Upstream partner churches. These questions are also put into an evaluative form in an article called [Missionaries Health Diagnostic](#). While all these questions can be good to ask once a year, consider asking a section or two of these questions per call. Make them your own. Encourage your advocates to make them their own. Hopefully these questions can serve a helpful springboard to fruitful and meaningful conversations with your missionaries.

1. Emotional and Physical Health

- Are you observing a sabbath regularly?
- Who are you sharing your feelings with on a regular basis?
- Are you exercising regularly? What does that look like?
- What types of things are you doing in your free time to recharge yourself?

2. Marriage and Family

- What conversations are you having about your relationship?
- Have you been able to get away with just the two of you?
- What are some ways for you to disciple your children?

- What did quality time with your children look like this month?
- How have you handled conflict as a couple?

3. Personal Spiritual Walk

- How have you been doing at abiding in Christ during this last month?
- What have you been learning from scripture reading or study?
- How is community in your church or team going?
- Have you had any sin struggles in the past month and how did you deal with them?

4. Ministry Engagement

- How are you meeting new people in your area?
- Tell me about a spiritual conversation that you had this month? Were you able to share the full gospel with the person? Did you give them a chance to respond to the gospel? What was their response?
- Are you discipling anyone at this time?
- How are you involved in a local church or church plant?
- Are you in the process of planning any type of short term trips with our church? Other churches?
- Do you have any ministry needs that we could possibly help with?

5. Cultural Bonding

- What do you enjoy about where you live?
- What type of things bring you stress where you live?
- Have you had any high cultural stressors recently? If so, can you describe them? (See also, [Helping Missionaries Navigate Culture Shock](#)).
- How is language acquisition or learning going?

6. Team and Community

- How are the relationships with the team leader? your team?
- Any points of tension or conflicts that you need to address?
- Do you have any expectations that are not being met?
- What expectations to they have of you that may not be being met?

7. Relationship with Missions Organization

- What can you celebrate about your organization?
- Are there any points of tension between you and the missions organization?

8. Level of Care from Sending Church

- Have you had regular contact from your sending church?
- Have you communicated prayer request to your advocate team?
- Have you been able to communicate with your prayer supporters recently?

Additional Resource

Debrief Questions - Self Care Checklist - Brenda Keck, 2012¹

Treasures to be Celebrated (build joy & gratitude)	Wounds to be Healed (need healing, help with forgiveness)
Losses to be Grieved (do they know how to grieve?)	Changes to be Acknowledged

Check out Upstream’s new book “Sending Church Applied” for a great overview of what it looks like to become a healthy, maturing Sending Church.



¹ The Upstream Collective, 2019 – Used with permission from Sojourn Community Church.