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Four Challenges Missionaries Face and How Your Church Can Help

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Four Challenges Missionaries Face and How Your Church Can Help Adam Fridenstine Mon, 11/06/2023 - 01:11 We read in Philippians 4:10â€“19 that the Philippian church greatly encouraged Paul. What was it that was so meaningful to him? It wasn't just their financial support, but it was also their continued care for him and their desire to be part of his work. As missionaries, Esther and I have often been incredibly blessed by churches who encourage us in our work here in El Salvador. The prayers, support, and communication from state-side churches has often come at just the right moment to lift our spirits and strengthen our hands in the work of the Lord. Churches who support missionaries want to be a blessing. But sometimes well-meaning people in those churches don't know how specifically to do that. Life on a foreign field is full of challenges many Christians back home never face. Understanding these challenges can help supporting churches know how to help their missionaries. Cultural Adjustments A Learning a new language and culture is more challenging than anyone who has not experienced it can comprehend. At the same time a missionary family is struggling to learn a foreign language, they are usually working through complicated legalities and often spending 20â€“40 hours per week navigating paperwork, foreign bank transactions, immigration, paying bills, and more. It's frustrating for them to have so much time eaten up by these necessities that would be non-existent or far simpler in their home country. Especially at the beginning, the missionary will often feel as if they are not fulfilling the Great Commission due to all the time these needs require. Pray diligently for your missionaries during this time, and communicate that to them. Be patient with them, as they would rather be doing other things as well. Recognize that it may take months or even years to see an established work, depending on the language and culture. Balancing many roles As missionaries strive to make a difference in the place that God has called them, they are often involved in many outreach ministries as well as building the church. Depending on the situation, they may have no trained help for several years, and there are no Bible colleges from which to hire help. There is a constant pressure to always be ready for the next church service, the next event, the next witnessing opportunity. Did they know this was part of what they signed up for? Absolutely! But it is still a lot on one's plate! You can help by initiating communication with the missionary, even when you are not asking something from them. Reach out with love and encouragement. Ask direct and love-loaded questions about the missionary and his family, marriage, health, etc. Give time and reminders when you are asking for a special update or personal communication. Discouragement and emotional needs Though not exclusive to foreign ministry, your missionaries will undoubtedly experience a multitude of discouragements and emotional needs on the field. The difference for missionaries is that there is likely a greater lack of a support team on the foreign field. Sometimes there are no other mature Christians nearby to help through their valleys. A missionary should never come off the field feeling lonely or unloved. Purpose to be a support team for your missionaries. Ask your church members to adopt a missionary family. (We have had many churches do this, rotating missionaries each year. Through the years, the missionary family has been loved by several families, and eventually the whole church feels as though they know the missionaries personally.) Financial Burdens Missionaries will spend many months on deputation raising funds to go to the field. They try to anticipate all financial needs for the foreseeable future in a place they have never previously lived. Although it is true that the income of a foreign missionary will often be higher than the nationals living in that same area, there are also many ministry expenses that a national would not have. Even with the best laid plans, good stewardship and constant support, things like inflation can make a huge difference in the monthly budget of a missionary. And even when churches always support on time and faithfully send the same amount for many years, those support dollars do not go as far as they used to depending on the economy in that particular country. The cost of living continually rises, while the missionary's support generally remains unchanged. How can your church help with the financial burdens of missionaries? Be sensitive to the economic challenges of living internationally on a fixed income. We have been blessed on a couple of occasions when a church reached out and purchased a new appliance to replace a broken one we were not able to replace at the time. Washing machines and refrigerators are luxuries, but they sure are blessings! You can also plan for occasional unannounced offerings for special projects. Communicate with your missionaries about their needs, and evaluate adjusting your support levels according to those needs. Without the financial support of churches, missionaries couldn't go. Without the prayer support, emotional support, and encouragement, missionaries will seldom go as far as they could. Category Missions Tags Missions

Date created: 2023/11/06