

Missionary Families: Caring for Parents and Their Kids

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God's call to missions affects the whole family. Missionary parents raise their kids in a cross-cultural setting, and under the spotlight that comes with vocational ministry. In this session we will explore the impact of both those factors on parents and missionary kids. We will consider some of the practical and emotional challenges missionary families need to navigate as the children grow up and, eventually, leave home. We will also discuss ways that we, as people who care for these families, can offer help and encouragement at each stage of the journey.

1. Parenting Missionary Kids: some things are universal.

Not everything about being a missionary parent is unique – they share many of the same experiences as other parents.

2. Parenting Missionary Kids: some things are unique.

Missionaries parent and MKs grow up in a context that adds complexity to their experiences.

• **Overlay 1: Highly Mobility**

Missionary families typically move every few years either from one place to the next, or back and forth between two places. Many times, they are also part of international communities characterized by frequent moves.

- The impact on friendships
- A surplus of grief & loss
- The challenge of being rooted
- The challenge of continuity

• **Overlay 2: Cross-Cultural Life**

Missionary families live in cross-cultural settings, and typically are “in between” people – not fully integrated into the host culture yet no longer fully part of the passport culture either.

- Raising bi-lingual (or multi-lingual) kids
- Raising bi-cultural (or multi-cultural) kids
- Creating an integrated family culture
- Developing a stable identity
- Navigating practical issues (e.g. school, health care, college choices)

• **Overlay 3: Family in Ministry**

Missionary families live under the spotlight that comes with vocational ministry.

- Life on display in the “goldfish bowl.”
- The effects of expectations – positive & negative; your own & other people's
- Boundaries and the demands of ministry and parenting
- The impact on spiritual development
- When the missionary hurts.