

POSTINGS

articles for missions mobilizers



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“I Might Be Interested in Missions”

How to respond to someone’s initial inquiry

You are a pastor, other church leader, a member of the global outreach (GO) team, a Sunday school teacher, a youth leader, or small-group coordinator. Someone expresses to you an interest in missions. How should you respond?

This month’s *Postings* provides general guidelines as well as some questions geared to six specific age or life stages. Each set of questions is followed by “Watch,” “Read,” and “Do” suggestions designed to complement your ongoing dialog about their missions engagement.

RESPONDING TO INITIAL MISSIONS INTEREST

1. **Take even very tentative comments seriously.** Don't dismiss anyone's interest, even if it is expressed hesitantly, or if it comes from someone very young or very old, or from someone who on the surface doesn't seem qualified. God may be stirring their heart for an active or support role in missions. Your job is to help them discover and pursue His plan for them. This will require more than a hallway conversation, so make an appointment to sit down for a more extended dialog.
 2. **Listen to their story.** The lists of initial questions below all begin with an invitation for the person to tell their story. Take time to listen carefully. Their story should tell you a lot about their spiritual journey and what influences God has been using to touch their heart.
 3. **Provide next steps.** To develop their missions understanding and measure the depth of their interest and vision, suggest specific action steps. Tailor the suggestions provided below to the individual and their specific context. Use any of the questions/suggestions that are appropriate, even if they are from a different life-phase list. Sometimes people expect church leaders to take the initiative and carry the responsibility for turning their missions dream into reality. Clarify that they will need to be proactive in learning more about what cross-cultural ministry requires and how their gifts might fit.
 4. **Explain that your church wants to walk with them on a discernment and preparation journey.** Regardless of the type of missions involvement they express interest in, clarify that it will involve a process of seeking God's will together. In most cases, the involvement of a mission agency should come later, after your church evaluates call, gifting, and agency fit.
 5. **Understand that this meeting is just the beginning.** Your initial conversation should be primarily information gathering, so some of the questions suggested below may best be saved for a subsequent discussion. You may want to schedule a follow-up session before concluding your first meeting or request that they complete some next steps before you set up another session.
 6. **Make discipleship your first priority.** Don't allow eagerness to see people engage in missions lead you to make assumptions that they are growing as Jesus followers and are prepared for the challenges of service. Especially for teens, you will want to involve their parents and youth leaders in measuring spiritual maturity. Ask for their insights and work together to see youth both grow and serve effectively.
- Guiding your people to discover God's missional purpose for their lives may be your GO team's most important and most fulfilling task. The following sets of questions and next steps can help you be ready to begin that journey alongside them.

MISSIONS CONVERSATION STARTERS FOR VARIOUS LIFE STAGES

JUNIOR- OR SENIOR-HIGH STUDENT

1. Tell me about what started your interest in missions.
2. Have you ever participated in a service project or missions trip? Tell me about it.
3. What type of missions experience do you think would be a good fit for you? Why?
4. Have you ever shared your faith in Jesus with someone who was not a Christian? What happened?
5. Do you have friends of a different culture or ethnic group? What have you learned about their culture or religious faith?
6. Have you talked to your parents about your interest in missions? Could we have another conversation about this and include them?

Possible Next Steps

*** WATCH** “*I Am a Missionary*” or “*A Missionary Life*”

*** READ** *Daughters of Hope* (Strom & Rickett). (Jr High) *Amy Carmichael: Rescuer by Night* (Walsh), *David Livingston: Africa’s Greatest Explorer*

(Bayly). (Sr High) *Brunchko* (Olson) or *There’s a Sheep in My Bathtub* (Hogan)

*** DO** Ask a missionary to tell you their story about God’s leading to missions. • (Jr High) As a first step for serving Jesus, volunteer to regularly

help in a ministry here at our church.

• (Sr High) Volunteer to join a team that regularly assists a cross-cultural ministry in our community.

MISSIONS CONVERSATION STARTERS FOR VARIOUS LIFE STAGES

COLLEGE STUDENT

1. What stimulated your interest in missions?
2. What types of service have you been involved in here at our church, in our community, or on your campus?
3. Have you participated in missions trips in the past? What were those experiences like and how did you grow as a result?
4. Have you ever shared your faith with someone who was not a Christian? What happened?
5. Do you have friends who are international students on your campus? How much time have you spent with them?
6. What is your major? Do you see that as related to your interest in missions?
7. How much time are you thinking of investing in your missions involvement? Would you be open to considering a missions internship here at our church or overseas?
8. Are your parents aware of your missions interest? Could you talk to them about it?
9. Have you discussed your missions interest with anyone else like a campus ministry leader or the leader of our church's college ministry?

Possible Next Steps

* WATCH **“Reaching the Unreached”** or **“End of the Spear”**

* READ Article - **“How to Find God’s Will for Your Life”** (Platt).
Book- *Passion and Purpose: The story*

of Jim Elliott (Miller) or Chasing Faith among Yaks and Nomads (Wyse)

* DO Join one of our church’s short-term trips; if you have trip experience, volunteer to lead or assist the leader of a future trip. •

Ask a friend to join you in watching and discussing the video series, **Momentum Yes.**

MISSIONS CONVERSATION STARTERS FOR VARIOUS LIFE STAGES

YOUNG ADULT

1. Tell me how you became interested in missions. How has God been working in your life?
2. Where and how could you imagine yourself involved in missions? For how long?
3. Do you think your family and friends could envision you doing this? Why or why not?
4. Do you have friends from a different religion or culture? What was your experience like relating to them or to others in cross-cultural settings? How comfortable were you?
5. Have you ever shared your faith with a non-Christian? Tell me about it.
6. What types of service and leadership have you been involved in at our church, at work, in our community, or on your campus (if a recent grad)?
7. What was your major in university or other job training you pursued? What type of job do you have now? Are you interested in taking a job overseas to have spiritual impact or are you looking to be a traditional missionary?
8. Would you be willing to take additional training (online or in person) to be better prepared?

Possible Next Steps

* **WATCH** “**Reaching the Unreached**” or “**What’s Wrong with the American Perception of Missions?**”

* **READ** Article - “**How to Find God’s Will for Your Life**” (Platt).
Book - *Something Needs to Change*

(Platt), *To Timbuktu and Beyond: A guide to getting started in missions* (Woodard), or *Live Life on Purpose* (Hickman)

* **DO** Volunteer for a regular assignment in a local ministry serving

immigrants or refugees. • Find a mentor, preferably one with cross-cultural missions experience, to guide you through the study, *Spiritual Equipping for Missions* (Shaw).

MISSIONS CONVERSATION STARTERS FOR VARIOUS LIFE STAGES

ADULT WITH CHILDREN AT HOME

1. How did you become interested in missions and what has God been doing in your life?
2. Where and how could you imagine yourself involved in missions? For how long?
3. What does your spouse think of this?
4. What experience have you had in cross-cultural service and/or church ministry? What did this reveal about your ministry gifting? What cross-cultural friendships do you have?
5. Have you ever shared your faith with a non-Christian? Tell me about it.
6. If you are considering a short time of service, would your family go too or would your spouse and children remain at home? How do they feel about that?
7. If you are considering moving your family overseas for an extended time, what are your thoughts about the implications for your children?
8. Have you discussed your missions interest with others? What advice did they offer?

Possible Next Steps

* **WATCH** “Mobilize: The Habits of a Global Christian”

* **READ** Articles - “7 Benefits of Raising Your Children on the Mission Field” ... “Can a couple with small children make it to the field?” ... “What if my teenage kids don’t want to move to the

mission field?” Book - *Mission Smart: 15 critical questions to ask before launching overseas* (Shaw)

* **DO** If thinking of longer-term service, talk to missionaries with children of a similar age. What advice do they have? • Invest your vacation visiting missionaries or an overseas

ministry recommended by your church, or spend time immersed in a cross-cultural ministry near you.

• If considering launching a business abroad, attend the **B4T Expo** (USA) or similar event.

MISSIONS CONVERSATION STARTERS FOR VARIOUS LIFE STAGES

SINGLE/EMPTY NESTER

1. Tell me about how you became interested in missions.
2. Where and how could you imagine yourself involved in missions?
3. Are you thinking of using vacation time or going for a longer time? How would this impact your employment?
4. What previous experience have you had serving in a cross-cultural context either locally or globally? How have you served in a local church? What ministry gifts were confirmed as you served?
5. Have you ever shared your faith with a non-Christian? Tell me about it.
6. (If married) Do the two of you share the desire to consider missions, or is this primarily the dream of one of you?
7. Would you be self-funded, or would you need at least some funding? If you would need support, are you willing to raise it?
8. What would you anticipate being your biggest hurdle to missions service? The biggest contribution you could make?

Possible Next Steps

* **WATCH** “**Discover Missions: 6 Ways to Reach God’s World**” In which of the areas do you think you could best contribute (you can choose more than one, maybe all!)?

* **READ** *Mission Smart: 15 critical*

questions to ask before launching overseas (Shaw) or *I Want to Make a Difference Now* (Parrott)

* **DO** Volunteer for a local, cross-cultural ministry that stretches you to serve outside of your comfort zone

over a period of time. • If considering launching a business abroad, attend the **B4T Expo** (USA) or a similar event in your country/region.

MISSIONS CONVERSATION STARTERS FOR VARIOUS LIFE STAGES

RETIREE

1. Tell me how you became interested in missions.
2. Where and how could you imagine yourself involved in missions? For how long?
3. What previous experience have you had serving in local or global missions or in a church context? What ministry gifts were confirmed as you served?
4. Have you ever shared your faith with a non-Christian? Tell me about it.
5. How is your health? Do medical considerations limit where and how it would be wise for you to serve?
6. (If married) Do the two of you share the desire to consider missions, or is this primarily the dream or idea of one of you?
7. (If parents of adult children) How do you think your children would react to your interest in serving in this way?
8. Would you be self-funded, or would you need an income or at least funding for travel and ministry expenses? If you would need funding, are you willing to raise financial support?

Possible Next Steps

*** WATCH “Discover Missions: 6 Ways to Reach God’s World”** After you watch the videos, in which of the six areas do you think you could best contribute (you can choose more than one, maybe all of them!)?

*** READ** *I Want to Make a Difference Now* (Parrott)

*** DO** Volunteer for a ministry role here at home that would stretch you outside your comfort zone. • Ask a mission agency recommended by

your church missions leaders how and where they think you might best serve.

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