

# Challenges for Debriefing: Parents and Kids

Chris Luppino, Director of Missionary Care  
Gospel Furthering Fellowship, Myerstown, PA.

## Introduction:

### What is a Personal Missionary Debriefing?

*“Debriefing is an intentional, scheduled, listening time. It allows a time and place for a missionary... to verbalize, to normalize, and to contextualize their most recent term on the field. It is asking how life and ministry has been for the individual, and how it is affecting them.” Lois McMartin (edited)*

### Why a Personal Missionary Debriefing?

1. To assist a missionary in making their own spiritual life the most important thing in their life.
2. To enable a missionary to thrive in rather than simply survive their missionary experience.
3. To help stem the tide of missionary attrition.
4. To prioritize the missionary over the ministry.
5. To give a missionary the opportunity to tell their whole story (to the degree that they choose) without fear of judgment.

Statistics and research prove that a Personal Missionary Debriefing can be a key tool in accomplishing these things.

### A Personal Missionary Debriefing is:

1. Best done 2-3 months after returning from the field after a term of service or at retirement.

The 2-3 months allows for some cultural adjustment and immediate concerns to have been addressed such as housing, vehicle, medical check-up, dental check-up, bank account established, cell service established,

2. Best conducted by someone trained in personal missionary debriefing.

3. Best done over several days in a quiet, comfortable, relaxing place without children/teens unless organized activities are planned for the children/teens.
4. Done on behalf of the missionary not the missions agency.
5. Confidential and does not result in a report (written or spoken) of any kind.

A Personal Missionary Debriefing is not:

1. Therapy, although it is therapeutic.
2. Counseling, although confidential listening time is available.
3. About the work, ministry, sending agency, or sending church.
4. Conducted by a someone to whom the missionary is not a direct report.

The Challenges:

1. Personal Missionary Debriefing is almost unheard of among independent Baptist and conservative Bible churches.
2. Missionaries are hyper sensitive to their confidence being violated, being used as a sermon illustration, their spirituality being judged, and their support being jeopardized.
3. A Personal Missionary Debriefing was not part of their original agreement with the sending agency.
4. They are unsure of the logistics such as where would they have to go, how much would it cost, what would they do with their children/teens during that time, and will it really be confidential.
5. They are unsure what their sending pastor, sending church, and/or sending agency will think about it.

What can we do?

1. Pastors need to educate themselves about and become a proponent of Personal Missionary Debriefing.

2. Sending pastors should require the missionaries sent from their church to attend a personal missionary debriefing at furlough and/or retirement.

This will be best accomplished with education and encouragement vs an edict “out of the blue.”

3. Supporting pastors should expect the sending agencies of the missionaries that they support to require a personal missionary debriefing at each furlough and/or retirement. If they don't they should be encouraged to do so.
4. The expense of a Personal Missionary Debriefing should be shared by the sending church and missionary. The missionary should include the cost in the level of support that they raise.
5. Pastors should not assume that sending agencies understand what a Personal Missionary Debriefing is.

**Conclusion:**