

Challenges for Third Culture Kids- **How Can We Minister to Them?**

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Introduction:

All Third-Culture Kids are **not** missionary kids. The children of diplomats and military personnel who serve overseas are Third Culture Kids. All missionary kids are **not** Third Culture Kids. Their parents may serve within their passport culture.

Sending churches are stewards of **missionaries**. Sending agencies/mission boards serve a purpose. However, a local church should not “outsource” its care for the missionaries it sends.

Supporting churches are stewards of missionary **dollars**.

1. Understand that there are many upsides to the Third Culture Kid experience.

- Understanding culture
- Developing foreign language skills
- International travel acumen
- Cultural Relativism vs. Ethnocentric
- Flexibility
- First Hand Ministry Experience

2. Educate ourselves about Third Culture Kids.

Some excellent books and podcasts will help us understand missionary kids. The needs of missionaries and Third Culture Kids are a crisis. This is true whether you have heard about it or not.

3. Develop a loving, non-judgmental attitude toward ministry kids in general and missionary kids in particular.

This is especially true for those with only young children.

4. Develop a realistic vs. romanticized understanding of missions and missionaries.

Many missionary biographies, perhaps most, could be categorized as “hagiography.” They minimize or ignore the flaws of the missionary while accentuating the virtues.

5. Develop a “Different but not wrong” attitude toward those outside our culture. By “different” we usually mean “better.” Understand ethnocentrism.

6. Admit what we don’t know, including what we don’t know that we don’t know.

A missionary trip or many is barely a cross-cultural experience. Most missionary trips are “sanitized.”

7. Vet mission boards for their understanding of, training about, and proactive ministry to Third Culture Kids.

8. Refer missionaries and their kids to Christian colleges that understand, give training concerning and providing intentional, experiential ministry to Third Culture Kids.

9. Seek out, vet, and facilitate the TCKs you send and support attending a TCK debriefing.

10. Long before missionaries visit your church, ask them what you can do to make their visit to your church is a blessing to them and their children/teens.

11. Provide a financial gift to returning missionaries specifically designated for clothing at each furlough.

12. Have a ministry for birthday and special event cards for the children/teens of the missionaries that you support.

13. Vet resources such as books, counselors, debriefings, crisis counseling, etc., and share them with missionaries proactively.

14. Pray by name for the children/youth of the missionaries that you support regularly.