

Family and Mission, is this possible?

This question has been raised many times. Can a family be used in the mission field? We firmly believe that families are a big blessing to our mission work and that God is using each individual, especially to impact the young generation. Today many are coming out of broken backgrounds. However, there are more challenges and responsibilities that need to be considered when thinking of living full time in the mission field as a family. One is to live as foreigners in a different country, with a different culture and language. Schooling needs can conflict, or just being away from relatives and family. Everyone needs to pray for an extra portion of wisdom to make good decisions, set right priorities, pray and believe together.

If you feel a call into mission, don't throw it away because of your family situation or because you have need of a bigger amount of financial support. Trust the Holy Spirit as he speaks, he will lead you step by step.

Dori Pieren, Family of five, Missionary at Help International, Philippines for 12 years

Growing up as a missionary kid

“Family” – “Mission”: These two words don't always seem to mix well. But actually, the mission field is one of the best places for a child to grow up in. I speak from my own experience. I was born in Germany, spent a few years in Uganda and have been growing up in Manila for the last 12 years. The life in a country that's not your own makes life so interesting. The many adventurous experiences, the enlarged worldview and the different cultures are just a few of the benefits. I was around 13 years old, when I realized for the first time, that I am different to other Swiss people. In the Philippines I was always different to the others, just because of my skincolor and hair and my height. Because I go to an International school with many nationalities represented, this part was never so apparent.

I love Switzerland and enjoy visiting there. I always enjoyed playing with my cousins. But I realized that their worldview was much smaller than mine and that of the people around me. Their discussions are all about farming. They've never ever entered an airplane and all their dreams circle around the valley. I speak several languages and I've had the chance to see rich and poor very close to each other. I've joined kids, jail and prayer outreaches and visited homes in the poorest garbage places. Yet (or perhaps because of this) I can absolutely enjoy a buffet set up, an “all you can eat” restaurant and dress up formally. I got to know Jesus, his love, I saw miracles of provision taking place and how people surrendered their lives to Jesus and got baptized by water and spirit. I saw how lives were transformed and new hope came into their eyes. I dream to be a missionary myself. I am not afraid to move and settle in new places. I am interested to know other people and how they grew up. My childhood was much richer than anything else I could have had in so many ways.

Jan Pieren, 17 year old

Our first outreach together as a family

We asked our children if they wanted to join the outreach in Tondo (the poorest area of the city). We told them to pray and to ask God. We oriented them and told them about the situations there. We knew that this would challenge all of us, but particularly our kids. They came back saying "yes, we want to go and share the love of Jesus". As a parent I knew that we need to do our part in discipling and protecting them during this experience. I made sure that my eye stayed on them. I even put a red cap on my 10 year old son for me to see him easily. We went for three days and had a great time. They shared that they felt burdened to see children that no one cares about. Learning how kids survive daily looking for food and seeing others sniffing drugs. It was encouraging to bring them hope and the love of God by taking time and sharing with them. But also, happily and thankfully, this is something they will be able to use in their young age. The whole family experienced Gods protection. It was our first time ministering as a family outside our normal ministry houses.

Lilibeth Guevarra, Family of four, Staff at Help International, Philippines

Joining a Camp as a whole family

Last year we I had an opportunity to share at KCM Sinag youth camp. They also invited my entire family. It was my first time to be invited as a guest speaker in a camp. God is widening my views of life, so that now I see that there are plans ahead in my life and in my whole family. As it was a youth camp my 18 year old daughter really enjoyed it, even though she didn't know most of the people there. I saw and heard from her that the camp put a mark in her heart, a precious memory of how God touched her heart personally and how God showed her hidden things in her heart. These are experiences that she will not forget!

We were both impacted: the youth congregation touched us, and we inspired them as a healthy example of a family (as so many of our youth come out of broken families). I am so thankful to God that years ago, he helped me to find new life in Jesus. After some restoration, I went to visit my daughter and married my former girlfriend. Today we are a happy family of five. How wonderful that God reunited our family after our separation of six years.

Ruel dela Cruz, Family of Five, Staff at Help International Philippines for 11 years

Closed doors for a family joining a mission outreach

We often hear that to go into the mission field as a family is too difficult. It will be much easier and more productive if you are single. We were also confronted with many closed doors for outreaches as a family, even though we felt called to go into the mission field as a family.

Today, ten years later, we can say it is a blessing to be in the mission field as a family. We have been living in the Philippines for nine years. We find the experience awesome, and know that we would have missed a lot if we wouldn't have followed what we were called to do.

Family and Mission

Because we are a family, living in our community, we can bless so many people. So many children who didn't experience a family can see, what it means to live as a family in a home. We are a living example for many, whether we want it or not. Particularly when we deal with any issues in our own family, we are in the spotlight. The people around us want to know how we deal with it.

Jeannine and David Specht, Family of Five

Tips and Tricks:

Some practically things which we learned over the years and feel to be important:

- Move into a different country only if you heard it directly from God. Yes, we as mother and father have a bigger responsibility than any single missionary! We have kids and we are not travelling alone.
- Let your family be the priority.
- You are an example for the people around you. Try to be transparent. Face difficulty in your own family first, before you serve the others.
- Set aside times, where you do something as a family. Your own kids need you as well!
- Keep safety, privacy and educational priorities in view.

We want to encourage all families to go for what you are called to. Be an example for the people around you. A healthy family is becoming rare nowadays! It doesn't matter where we stay! Just let us shine for the one who created the family.