

# How to Use Visiting Missionaries in Your Class

*“Make it a habit to ask each visiting missionary to tell specifically how God called him.”*

Visiting missionaries represent one of the church’s most underused educational resources. Rich with unusual and inspiring stories of God’s working around the world, they usually speak only to adult groups. Why? Many missionaries can be powerful tools for reaching children, even if their usual ministry is to adults. Here are some ideas I have found helpful.

When missionaries are coming through, find out whether they normally teach children’s classes or meetings, and if so, what they prefer to do. Some are great storytellers, others have interesting artifacts to show, and some do puppet shows. Find out if the missionaries have a favorite method and plan to utilize that.

You can also make suggestions you think would interest your class. Encourage the missionary to select two or three of the following:

- Show and explain objects from their country or ministry.
- Show or describe children’s toys, games, and pastimes in their land.
- Sing in their adopted tongue. Choose from typical Sunday school songs, translated songs your class would recognize in English, children’s play songs, or the national anthem.
- Recite a Bible verse in their adopted language.
- Describe a day in the life of a child in their country, telling about work, school, play and worship.
- Tell about schools in their country.
- Tell about home life in their country.
- Teach the class a simple chorus, a greeting, or counting to five in the native language.
- Tell a true story about a child to whom they’ve ministered.
- Describe a Sunday School or worship service in their country.
- Tell about interesting food they’ve eaten, and describe the daily diet.
- Show where their adopted country is on a map and/or globe.

What interests your students most? History? Airplanes? Fashion? Animals? Music? Advising the missionaries of some of the special interests of class members can help them plan a presentation that will especially appeal to your particular class.

Cultural presentations add interest, but always encourage the missionaries to share the spiritual needs of the people they serve. What is needed to reach the children of their adopted country? What problems or roadblocks stand in the way of ministry there? What specific ways can the children pray for a more effective outreach there?

Missionary interviews can also be very effective, but not every missionary likes to “think on his feet.” You might ask the missionaries to provide a list of ten questions for you to ask, or you might get the children involved by helping them compile a list of questions the week before (to which you can add, if necessary). Then send the missionaries the list a week ahead so they will have time to

phrase wise and interesting answers. Make the interviews fun by providing a fake microphone and designating one or more students “roving reporters” to get “on the spot reports from around the world.”

Another way to add to variety is to have “popcorn questions.” Before class, write each question on a small piece of paper and wad it up so that it resembles a piece of popcorn. Put the pieces in a pan and shake them, letting the children “catch” a piece of popcorn and read the question to the missionary.

In preparing questions, always avoid questions that can be answered “yes” or “no” because they do not encourage complete and interesting answers. Seek questions that begin, “What were . . .” “Why did . . .” “What was the hardest (best, most exciting, most challenging, most frightening) . . .?”

If the missionary visit falls near a holiday, find out how the missionary’s country celebrates that or a similar holiday. If holidays are very different there, ask the missionaries to describe what holidays the people there celebrate, how, and why.

If the missionaries have children traveling with them, find out whether they would like to answer questions or tell about life as an MK (Missionary Kid). In utilizing children it is doubly important to send a list of questions or topics ahead, as children have not had much experience in “ad-libbing” and are often frightened by it. Try to send the list two weeks in advance.

**“ENCOURAGE CHILDREN IN YOUR CLASS TO BECOME PEN PALS WITH THE CHILDREN OF VISITING MISSIONARIES,”** and share their letters with the class. Keep a list of missionary children along with birthdates so you can make recommendations.

Make a “big deal” of missionary visits. Let the class know ahead that something special is in store. One week ahead, decorate “Chinese” or “African” or “Indian,” asking the missionaries for suggestions if needed.

Do the missionaries have any needs your class could help meet? Let your students know that you will take a special offering toward a specific project. The offering can be before, during, or after the missionary visit. Take the offering in a container related to the missionary’s work or culture, for example, a straw hat, feed sack, Chinese dish, etc.

**‘KNOWING THE VARIETY OF WAYS IN WHICH GOD’S SERVANTS HEAR HIS CALL CAN HELP CORRECT MISCONCEPTIONS AND MAKE CHILDREN MORE RECEPTIVE TO GOD’S LEADING IN THEIR OWN LIVES.’** Make it a habit to ask each visiting missionary to tell specifically how God called him. In other lessons compile and compare the results so that the children can see that God makes His will known in many ways.

If a group of missionaries is available simultaneously, plan a symposium on the subject. “What’s Neat about Being a Missionary,” or “Why I’m glad I’m a Missionary.”:

Be sure to tell the missionaries ahead of time whether your class is composed primarily of unsaved, new believers, or children from church families who have received solid spiritual training. Give

them some idea what you perceive the spiritual needs of the class to be, so that they can share things from their experience to help meet those needs.

Encourage the missionary to give an invitation to receive Christ or to seek further information and pray about serving Christ on the mission field. Many missionaries made their initial commitments as children.

If your class is composed largely of believers, ask them to close the class by praying for the visiting missionaries and the specific needs they have mentioned. In extended hour or a following class hour, make prayer reminders as a project to help the children to keep praying. From time to time share appropriate highlights from the missionaries' letters and reports.

Keep an attractive class bulletin board of missionary pictures, especially those who have visited your class. Get a small globe and put a tiny sticker dot where each missionary is located. Be sure to include one of the missionaries in your class prayer time each week, perhaps asking the one leading in prayer to put his finger over the dot on the globe where that person ministers as he prays for him.

Invite the missionaries home to dinner, inviting two different class members to join you each time, or plan a potluck with the class. Encourage the children to ask the missionaries other questions and to converse with them.

Slides can be used effectively, but not a long presentation. Ask the missionaries to especially select a few slides of special interest to children, and make this just part of a larger presentation.

After each missionary visit, write a class letter of thanks to the visiting missionary, letting each student add a few lines telling what the missionary visit meant to him.

When does the next missionary visit your church? Plan now to utilize that visit to encourage children as well as adults to fulfill God/s great missionary purpose.