



# Being a Safe Harbor: How Churches Can Be a Space of Wholeness & Healing

Elizabeth Forshee

---

## How to Ask Curious Questions

*One of the hardest struggles for cross-cultural workers when they return state-side is feeling insecure, misunderstood, and being “talked-at” rather than people listening. You may be tempted to tell them what they missed in America or relate to them with a personal story. Try to resist. A good listener focuses on the other and is curious to hear more and go deeper. Be curious!*

*It isn't always easy to have a conversation with our missionaries because we don't understand their experiences, so to help you be a better listener, **here are some examples** of open-ended, curious questions that help you know, understand, and show love to your missionaries.*

1. Tell me about the project you've been involved with. How are you feeling about the work?
2. How has this last season of service been? I'd love to hear about it.
3. What is an ordinary day like for you in (the place you live)? Invite them to show you photos and tell stories.
4. Tell me about your apartment and neighborhood.
5. What do people do in the evenings?
6. How is language study going? What are you enjoying, and what has been challenging?
7. How do you sense your children are transitioning? or How are your children thriving or struggling?
8. Tell me what it is like to homeschool your children in (place).
9. Talk to the children, ask them what they like about living in (place). Who are their friends, where do they play, what do they study, what food do they like, what is hard about their experiences, what are they looking forward to in America? Children often get ignored, so it's important to notice and engage with them as well. They often feel scared and that America is not their home.
10. How are you doing as a single person, have you found friends and community? If you are struggling with loneliness, tell me about it.
11. How have you been experiencing God answering your prayers?
12. What struggles have you been facing this season? How can we listen to and serve you in this area?

13. What has brought you joy in ministry and life in (place)?
14. Are there any stories you'd like to share with me that I haven't asked about?
15. How is your marriage, and in what ways can we walk alongside you?
16. (For teachers) How do you engage with your students? Tell me what it is like to be a teacher in your context.
17. What are you learning about the culture?
18. Tell me about some funny stories or situations you've experienced.
19. What differences do you notice about life in (place of service) in comparison to America?
20. What are you finding to be challenging as you enter back to the USA? Is there anyway we can help ease that transition?
21. Where do you feel God is growing you? Where do you feel far from God?
22. Tell me about the place you live, what is the city/village like? How do you get around town? What are the people and culture like?
23. Are there any new traditions you've adopted as a family/single person from the culture? Tell me more about why that is important to you.
24. Have you noticed your worldview changing? I'd love to hear what you are noticing.
25. Tell me about the food you eat.
26. What festivals are celebrated in (place) that we don't celebrate? Would you mind telling me about them?
27. What challenges are you facing in ministry? What support do you feel you are lacking and would love to see?
28. How is your team praying for the work, each other?
29. Tell me about your team dynamics.
30. How are you feeling spiritually? What longings do you notice in your life in this season?
31. Where do you feel tired, worn-out, and need Sabbath rest?
32. How are the culture and your experiences in (place) changing your view of God?
33. Tell me about the friendships you've made.
34. Have any situations been incredibly hard? Are there sin struggles you'd like to share? (Remember, be a safe, non-judgmental listener. These are hard issues that require love toward confession, forgiveness, and healing.)
35. How can we help you work through these sin struggles? What support do you need?
36. What sort of activities do you do for fun? How do you spend your weekends?
37. What has surprised you about living and working in (place)?
38. If they share something new to you, you can respond: That's interesting, I don't know much about that, could you tell me more? or Wow, that's fascinating, what was that like for you?
39. What is it like for Christians in (place)?
40. Are there adjustments you are struggling with as you acclimate to America?

