

10 Questions Missionary Kids Would Love to be Asked

Most MKs are asked hundreds of questions during their families' home assignments. Ironically, many of us leave our passport countries feeling unknown. In all honesty, we usually don't answer questions well. Our fumbling answers can create distance. Many times we feel as though these questions are asked politely, without time or desire to listen to our answers. In order to avoid awkwardness or unintentional hurt, MKs can detach and dispel memorized responses.

This makes it difficult for those who truly want to connect. Have you ever longed to know an MK, but don't know how to reach his or her heart? Have you sensed that we struggle to respond to your questions, but don't know what else to ask? As an MK, I've learned that certain questions can unlock the heart.

CHURCH-LOBBY QUESTIONS

Ask these questions when you want to make a friendly connection with an MK. Stop. Look the MK in the eye. And listen. Since we are asked so many questions, we usually gauge our response based on the question-asker's body language.

Question #1 What is the funniest thing that has ever happened to you overseas?

Like most MKs, I've made enough cultural blunders to fill a book. Most of these mess-ups include public bathing, getting lost, and/or eating unique cuisine during my family's travels.

I love sharing these humorous memories. I can easily tell pieces of my story and describe my life as an MK. A side note: Prepare to laugh. (We tend to regularly embarrass ourselves cross-culturally.)

Question #2 What do you miss about your host country?

"You must be thrilled to be back!" and "You must miss the US terribly!" and "I don't know how you live over there!"

While on home assignment, I struggle with these frequent, well-intended assumptions. Most people don't realize I miss Japan (my host country) every day. "How could you miss a country that you don't technically belong to?" People wonder. Sometimes I feel as though these longings are misunderstood or unrecognized.

Question #3 Can you describe a regular day in your life?

This is my favorite question. In reality, my daily life doesn't look that different from any other normal teenager: breakfast. School. Homework. Church. But that's not the point.

I love this question because it indicates genuine curiosity and desire to know the details of my life. Not my parent's life. Not details of our ministry or the culture I live in. But *my* life.

Question #4 Where's your favorite place to go in your host country?

This is an easy question for MKs, instantly relieving stress. My answer would be the sushi bar ten minutes from my home in Hiroshima. Sushi is my ultimate comfort food.

This question and the pursuing conversation recognize our love for our host countries that have become a significant part of who we are.

Question #5 Which places do you feel most at home?

When I visit the United States, many people tell me, "You must be so glad to be home!" They don't realize that I *left* home to *return* home. I have many homes, not just one.

"Home" is an ambiguous term for MKs. To answer this question, we might even name a place where

we've never actually lived. Once, my sister told a church member she felt most at home in Thailand (with other MKs). Sometimes it's the people, not the place, which creates this sense of belonging.

COFFEE-SHOP QUESTIONS

These questions aren't supposed to be asked in a church lobby. Ask these questions when you are intentionally investing time and energy into the life of a specific MK.

Question #6 What's the hardest and best thing about being missionary kid?

I would never trade my MK experience. But some people unintentionally dismiss the hardships of life abroad: "You are so lucky!" They exclaim, "You have such great experiences!"

I agree whole-heartedly. But good is always intertwined with struggles. MKs need permission and a safe place to talk about them, without fear of judgement or a quick beckoning to focus, instead, on the positive.

Question #7 What characteristics of your host country's culture have become a part of you?

Many MKs *look* like one country and *act* like another.

If you scroll down and look at the picture next to my bio, you might not realize that I'm part Asian. Outwardly, I have blonde hair and blue eyes. Inwardly, I have Asian mannerisms, thought-processes, and cultural tendencies. Sometimes I receive strange looks from people who don't understand the "Asian" side of me. This question conveys positivity and curiosity of the ways my host country has changed me.

Question #8 What scares you most about visiting/returning to your passport country?

Visiting the US scares me. This seems ironic, since I was born in the US and am American. But I don't know how to live life in the US anymore. While in Japan, I am accepted as the foreigner. But in the US, I feel like a foreigner who is expected to fit in.

By asking this question, you will help us process these fears, which is key to a healthy adjustment.

Question #9 What are some of your deepest losses as a missionary kid?

When I became an MK at nine-years-old, my entire world "died." We left family, comfort, and literacy. My family and I had to create a new world in Japan while learning to read, speak, listen, and write. Even going simple places (like the grocery store) seemed stressful. This significantly impacted my sense of identity.

Most MKs also lose a grounded understanding of their passport countries. Change is a constant in an MK's life. And with this comes overwhelming, accumulating losses.

Question #10 How can I pray for you?

One time, my parents were presenting to a small group in Ohio. A lady came up to me after the presentation. With a kind smile, she asked me how she could pray. I started rehearsing my memorized response, "Please pray for the ministry..." She stopped me mid-sentence. "No, no, no. Your parents already covered that, and I will definitely be praying. But how can I pray for *you*?"

I stared at her. Tears welled. This was the first time anyone had asked for a prayer request from me, personally.

These are the top ten questions that resonate with me. One of my MK friends recently told me that during home assignment, she wanted to be asked "any meaningful question by someone who was truly interested in knowing the answer." The questions themselves are not as important as the spirit of those who ask them. Ask specific questions. Ask sincerely. Ask with your whole heart and with your full attention. This is what truly matters most to MKs.