

Who we are, and what we do

Ron & Bonnie Koteskey

We taught for 35 years in Christian colleges as well as in public and Christian elementary schools. Bonnie taught elementary school as well as teacher education at the college level, and Ron taught psychology at the undergraduate level in college. Our three children are all married and have families of their own. As member care consultants with GO InterNational of Wilmore, KY, we are now retired and, as volunteers, we provide member care for missionaries. We are not licensed health care professionals, but we emphasize care, encouragement, growth, and prevention of problems rather than treatment of severe problems. We provide such care to anyone, anytime, and anywhere at no charge for our time, usually providing our own transportation to the nearest airport and asking that those we are helping provide ground transportation, lodging, and food. Rather than working as professionals for pay, we provide member care as amateurs in the original sense of the word—out of love rather than for money. We have a mailing list of about 175 prayer supporters as well as about 55 financial supporters.

We do whatever we can to help missionaries. We do not belong to any sending agency but help others as someone with no official connection to their agency. Listed below are things we are currently doing, but we are always open to new ways to help. Let us begin with the most general forms of help, continue with helping missionaries through their years of service, and end with specific ministries.

Websites. We have two websites, www.missionarycare.com and www.crossculturalworkers.com. Both websites contain brochures and books which people anywhere in the world can visit to read, download, print, copy and distribute the information free of charge to anyone who can use it. www.missionarycare.com freely uses the term “missionary” and is easily found when people search for missionary care. www.crossculturalworkers.com never uses the term “missionary” so that anyone working in a culture where accessing material on missionaries would endanger their ministry can visit freely.

Brochures. Both websites contain 62 “brochures” on topics relevant to living in other cultures and working as missionaries. These brochures may be downloaded as .pdf files and distributed to anyone as long as they given to others free of charge.

E-books. Both websites contain E-books which can be downloaded free of charge by anyone, anytime, anywhere.

- *What Missionaries Ought to Know...: A Handbook for Life and Service* is a compilation of many of the brochures about missionary life.
- *Missionary Marriage Issues* is a compilation of many of the brochures about married life for couples serving on the field.
- *Before you get “Home”:* *Preparing for Reentry* is written for use several months before returning to your passport country.
- *Coming “Home”:* *The Reentry Transition* can be used as preparation for debriefing in a group, when being debriefed by an understanding person, or to debrief yourself.

- *We’re Going Home: Reentry for Elementary Children* is a story and activities for children 6-12 years of age.
- *I Don’t Want to Go Home: Parent’s Guide for Reentry for Elementary Children* is a companion book written specifically for parents to help them assist in their children’s reentry.
- *Third Culture Kids and Adolescence: Cultural Creations* is written specifically for adolescent TCKs. Of course, the information in it is also applicable to other adolescents.
- *Understanding Adolescence* is a companion book written specifically for parents of adolescents.
- *Raising Resilient MKs: Resources for Caregivers, Parents, and Teachers* was edited by Joyce Bowers and first published by ACSI in 1998.

Database. A database with more than 800 references to published material about missionary member care is on www.missionarycare.com. Those visiting this database can find reading lists or annotated bibliographies on any of more than 100 topics. They can also find lists of materials published by particular authors.

Missionary Care by Radio. Trans World Radio broadcasts in 180 languages to reach people through radio. TWR has begun a daily 15-minute program in English with broadcasts reaching from Central Asia through North Africa, and you can find out more by visiting www.membercareradio.com. TWR is adapting the brochures to a format suitable for broadcast to let Christians working in this area of the world know that they are neither alone nor forgotten.

Orientation. In an effort to decrease attrition, we participate in the training of new missionaries. We have made presentations on expectations, generational differences, moral purity, and conflict resolution. Of course, during our time at orientation we are available to talk privately with any missionary candidates who want to see us.

Seminars. We present information on various topics to a variety of missionary groups. We have done seminars on third culture kids, leadership, generational differences, conflict, anger, adolescence, maintaining mental and physical health, maintaining sexual purity, and psychology from a Christian perspective. We have made these presentations to groups as varied as the entire missionary force of one agency, missionaries on a field, seminary students, university students, field directors, national pastors, retirees, and appointees.

Missionaries in Our Home. Missionaries have stopped by our home to discuss issues that concern them. We have talked with individuals and couples about a variety of topics ranging from grief to interpersonal relationships to debriefing when they return to the states. These are often people who have met us in larger group settings such as conferences, retreats, orientations, seminars, or perhaps discovered us on our web page.

Missionaries on the Field (from Our Home). Missionaries serving on their fields are unable to stop by our home, so we have communicated with them in a variety of ways. Of course, telephone conversations are always helpful, and long distance rates between most countries are now quite reasonable. E-mail is free, but the time between sending a message

and receiving a reply may be rather long. Skype is free and instantaneous.

On-Site Visits. At the invitation of missionaries, we visit them on the field to help them cope with various issues. We do this only if everyone involved wants us to come, and we have the blessing of the mission agency. At these times we have talked with individuals, couples, and groups of missionaries. We are not sent by the agency, but go only when invited by the missionaries themselves.

Care of Missionaries in a Geographical Area. We are seeing the realization of a dream we have had for several years, a dream of providing care for missionaries from many different agencies in a given place. We go on a regular basis to the same missionaries so that they will get to know us and feel free to talk with us, rather than just going to help in a crisis situation. We visit Bolivia on a regular basis, talking with 30-35 missionaries from five different mission agencies each time.

Reentry. We facilitate reentry retreats for missionaries in transition as they return to the USA. This includes a group debriefing as we talk for two days about where they have been, where they are now and where they are going.

Missionary Kids. Since we live near a college that has a rather large number of TCKs, we were very involved with them while we were teaching at the college. Of course, now that we are retired and travel more, we are unable to keep up the same active relationship. However, we do let them know that we are available to help them however we can, and they contact us for everything from taxes to borrowing things to personal problems.

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