

WHAT

**ASPIRING MISSIONARIES**

OUGHT TO KNOW ABOUT

**RELATIONSHIPS**



So, you decided you are going to be a missionary, or at least you are considering it.

Awesome!

We're excited for you!

While considering missions, you may have come up with a lot of unanswered questions. Should I be married before I go? What if I want to get married someday but I'm single now, should I still go? What should I even be looking for in a spouse?

Don't worry. You're not alone.

We interviewed [Carol Freeman](#) and [Steve Eliason](#), both with 15+ years experience living on the mission field, and asked the eight biggest questions we had about relationships on the mission field.



[Carol Freeman](#) spent 15 years planting churches in the Philippines. She is married and has 6 children. She currently works as the student pastor at Bethany Global University in Bloomington, Minnesota. She is an active mentor of young women as they prepare to go into the mission field.



[Steve Eliason](#) spent 11 years planting churches in the Philippines. He is married and has 5 children. He currently is the assistant to the Director of Bethany International Ministries; teaches courses on Cross-Cultural Communications, Cross-Cultural Evangelism, Church History and Discipleship at Bethany Global University in Bloomington, Minnesota. He is an active mentor of young men as they prepare to go into the mission field.

## What are the advantages/disadvantages of being single on the field?

CAROL

“You have more mobility as a single person. You are more likely to be taken into a family’s home; this will allow you to become more immersed in the language and culture. When you’re single, your attention can be more focused and you don’t have to raise as much money.

“A disadvantage of being single on the field would be loneliness. You don’t have a person who knows you really well, in many cases, and who can be there to process through things and pray with you.”

STEVE

“An advantage of being single is you have more attention to give to the task. A disadvantage would be the need for fellowship. You have friendships with the local people of course, but it’s not the same.

## What are some advantages/disadvantages of being married on the field?

CAROL

“Often times people who are married are viewed as more mature, so it gives what they say some credibility, and people may listen to you more. Another advantage is if you have a problem with someone of the opposite gender your spouse can talk with them.”

“While there are good things about people viewing you more maturely, often times married couples are given less grace. As a married person it is often expected that you have life figured out more than a single person.”

STEVE

“An advantage is you don’t have to deal with the drama and complexity of intercultural relationships. Most of the people you will be ministering to will be married. If you are also married it gives you a bridge to them.”

“A disadvantage is that investing in your marriage is very time consuming. You don’t have the time to put into your marriage that you might have in the states and that can be very hard.”

## When in a relationship do you bring up your calling?

CAROL

“If you are dating for the purpose of finding the person you are going to marry, then bring it up on the first date!”

STEVE

“Right away, or as soon as it seems reasonable. If you are convinced of your calling, it's important that your spouse is going to help facilitate your ministry and you theirs.”

## Is it okay to date cross culturally in the country you're doing missions in? If so what are some things you should be careful of?

CAROL

“You need to seek the Lord in it and ask him. There are a lot of things you need to consider in a cross-cultural relationship; do you come from similar classes? Do you have similar levels of education? Do they come from a Christian family? Do you speak their language and have you lived in each other's countries? None of these differences are 'deal breakers' but they will make the relationship more difficult. Cross-cultural relationships require you to be more selfless than relationships of the same culture. You will need to take the best parts of both your cultures and blend them together.”

STEVE

“It is okay. It will be more complicated. You should think about what dating means in that culture, its likely different then dating in the US.”

## What if the person you are dating is called somewhere else? Not called?

CAROL

“Pray about it. Ultimately you can’t be married to a person and live in a different country than them. You need to spend time intentionally praying about God’s desire for you both. Wait until you have peace about it one way or another. If you aren’t already married it might mean breaking up with that person. Spend time seeking God’s will either way.”

STEVE

“It ultimately comes down to the issue of trust. Are you trusting God with the consequences from the choice you’re making, whether it’s breaking up or not going to that place. Either way you need to trust God and own the choice.”



## Should newly married couples go straight into the field or spend time in the US first?

CAROL

“It would be rare for any mission’s agency to send a couple into the field in their first year of marriage. After that it is fine to go out.

It’s important to remember that marriage in itself is cross-cultural. You want to spend time adjusting to this new part of your life before you jump into a different culture.”

STEVE

“At Bethany you need to be married a year before you go. It’s just too much stress to put on a couple. Wait a year, or some couples may need more than a year, then go.”

## Should I go into the field single if I know I want to be married?

CAROL

“If you have a desire to go, then go! Most missions agencies aren’t going to make you sign a 20-year contract. Go into the field for a time and continue to pray about it. God may work through you being single, and He may have you meet someone in that time, you just have to keep seeking Him. “

STEVE

“Yes. It’s the issue of trusting God again. Trust Him to bring that person into your life. You might meet them while you’re overseas.”

## What characteristics should I look for in a spouse if I plan on going into the field?

CAROL

“Look for someone who is a hard worker and a pioneer; someone who is adventurous and likes to share their faith. You should look for someone who doesn't mind being laughed at because you will probably make a lot of mistakes while learning the language. Find someone who is kind, has a servant's heart, can endure hardship, and seeks out foreign friends.”

STEVE

“Someone who has a calling. Ideally, look for a person with complimentary gifts to yours, and who has an appreciation for your gifts. Seek a person who is humble and unselfish.”

We are so excited God is prompting you towards missions, but maybe you are trying to process more than this one article can help you through.

If you:

- Have a desire to effectively minister to people cross culturally
- Are seeking authentic Christian community
- Have a passion for the unreached
- Want hands on training in the field
- Want to do it all while getting a college degree

Check out Bethany Global University's tuition paid missionary training program and request a brochure [here](#)