
Welcome Home!

A Guide for Receiving Your “Expat”

They’re back! So everything should be much easier for them, right? Actually...*probably not*.

Instructions

You have someone in your circles who has spent significant time serving cross-culturally. He or she has lived as an expatriate, or 'expat' – i.e., a person who lives outside his or her own native country. The location and cultural context your expat has lived in is probably very different from yours. Before you get together, your friend or family member thinks it may be helpful for you to be aware of some of the information shared here. Please review this and give it thought and prayer as you prepare for your time together.

Did you know that it is normal for those moving “home” from significant time overseas to experience **grief**, and to feel **misunderstood** and **unknown**? Listening to the stories expats have to share is one of the most significant ways you can support them during the time they are transitioning into a new location and stage of their life journeys.

To be a listening presence, showing interest and asking questions, will be a gift few others will offer. Simply put, most of us are pretty involved in our own lives. To ask questions, give someone space and time to really share (without side-tracking the conversation into our own stories) – that kind of listening presence is not easily found.

The gift of your time and interest will help to support returning expats as they engage in a multitude of adjustments, and seek to find new ways of living in what will probably feel to them like a very challenging place and time. Note that while it may seem counterintuitive, their challenges will only be multiplied if they are returning to the place from which they launched. **Why is this? They have changed and grown. You may not have noticed it, but you have changed and grown.** Things in your surrounding society and culture will have changed – perhaps for better, perhaps for worse. It is important for expats to share what has happened in their lives so they can make all the adjustments this new season of life will require with a sense of being heard, seen, known, and supported.

Before your expat arrives, the following article may help you understand further. It may also help you know how to pray in preparation for your get-together:

[8 Things I wish someone had told me before I moved back to the US](#)

Meeting With Your Ex-pat

Before you meet, ask your expat:

- How would you like to approach our time together?
- How would you like me to use this list of possible questions?
- What other questions would be helpful for me to ask?

Possible questions you could ask:

- What were the last few months in-country like for you?
- What kinds of pressures/feelings/situations did you navigate as you prepared to move?
- Who were the people that were hardest to say goodbye to?
- What has become most rewarding for you in these last few years? Most challenging?
How did this affect you?
- How are you feeling about leaving your life there?
- How are you feeling about leaving your work there?
- What was it like to transition the children out of the country?
- What's it been like to come back?
- How do you feel about being here?
- What do you miss?
- What feels different or strange to you now that you are here? (Is any of that surprising?
If so, what?)
- What are some of the things that are challenging for you, now that you are here?
- How are your spouse/kids responding to the change?
- How do things feel different than when you last lived here?
- How are you feeling as you look forward to the next few months?
- What kinds of things are you looking forward to?
- Do you need some kind of help now?
- How can I support you in the coming weeks?
- How can I pray for you right now?

Thank you for your willingness and desire to meet and minister to your expat through your listening presence.