

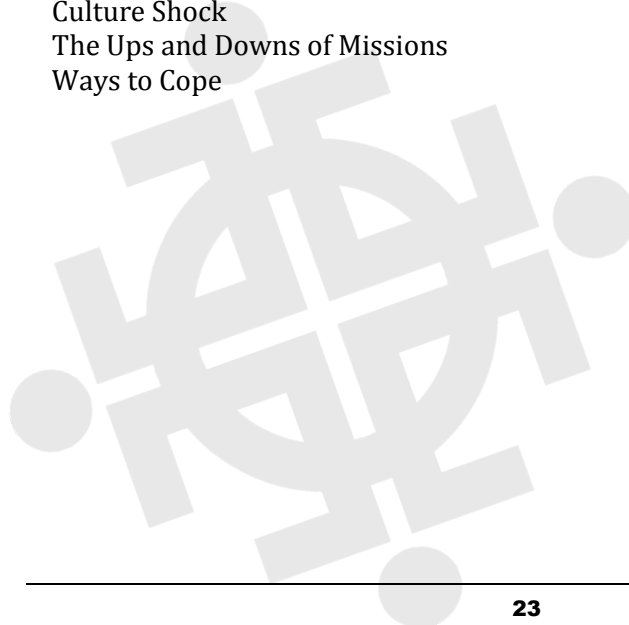


## TEAM TRAINING

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### “TRAIN THEM UP IN THE WAY THEY SHOULD GO”

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## Train them up in the way they should go





*Team Training Reflections and Exercises*

**N**ow that your church/ministry has determined as a group you have been called by God to participate in God’s work in the world by going on a cross-cultural, and possibly, international trip ...

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**ICON KEY**

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	Exercises
	Journaling
	Forms
	Bible Study

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And your team has a grasp of Missio Dei ...

It is now time to prepare your team members to have a healthy view of expectations, motivations and overall philosophy of what has been termed as “mission trips” or “vision trips.” Having your entire team on the same page with the “why” and the “what” will be vital.



## Who is Poor?

### At the meeting ...

Ask participants to introduce themselves. Ask various questions, for example:

1. How has God confirmed, or not yet confirmed, your participation with this trip?
2. Why are you going? What is your motivation?
3. What do you expect during and after the trip?

As we prepare for a cross-cultural mission experience, we must start with our view on poverty. In general, what do Westerners view as poverty? Westerners tend to see poverty from a material standpoint. In affect, people who do not have material goods or financial resources are poor.

But what really is poverty and how does this play a part in our preparation for this trip? The answer influences our understanding of why God is sending us and what our role is.

For example, **poverty is typically defined as “deficit” or “lack”**

1. Lack of basic needs (food, shelter, clean water, safety)
  - a. Approach – provide what is lacking.
  - b. Assumption – when what is missing is provided, the poor will no longer be poor.
2. Lack of knowledge (education, training)
  - a. Approach – provide formal and non-formal education.
  - b. Assumption – if the poor learn enough, they’ll no longer be poor.
3. Lack of spiritual truth (Christian belief)
  - a. Approach – evangelism.
  - b. Assumption – if the poor find Jesus, they’ll no longer be poor.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Bryant Myers, *Walking with the Poor: Principles and Practice of Transformational Development* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999) 51-72.

According to Bryant Myers, all are true – poverty is deficit. But limiting poverty to this framework creates problems. Absence of things leads to solution of “provision” and the poor become recipients.

- Treating the poor as recipients devalues individuals; they are not seen, nor do they see themselves, as created in the image of God
- Another problem that can arise has to do with those who give. Responders to the need can think of themselves as messianic; and, that is not good for anyone.

Bryant Myers teaches that the nature of poverty is fundamentally relational – “Poverty is a result of relationships that do not work, that are not just, that are not for life, that are not harmonious or enjoyable. Poverty is the absence of shalom in all its meanings.”<sup>19</sup> Poverty shows up in physical, social, mental and spiritual dimensions.

Looking at poverty in this light, allows us a framework to understand needs all around the world. Poverty is broken relationships with God, self, others, and the world. So, every human being faces poverty at some level. Poverty of the non-poor is just as real, it’s just expressed differently – as marred identity of a messiah complex or perhaps overindulgence leading to isolation from God and others.”



**The community of faith is sent** to the mission of reconciliation and transformation.<sup>20</sup>

**Reconciled to God – Father, Son & Holy Spirit**

People have a broken relationship with God. They seek other gods, rather than the Creator Himself. These gods could be idols, but they could also be anything an individual makes their meaning and central purpose of life. If it is anything other than a relationship with God Himself, and living in His will, then this relationship is broken.

The reality is, in most cases, humans have broken relationship with God and still need reconciliation. Sometimes, humans have reduced God to a convenient ritual, or side bar to their life goals and purpose. God is “brought out of the box” when needed in drastic circumstances.

Our relationship with God is restored through faith in Jesus Christ and is a gift, not something earned. Once the relationship is restored the Holy Spirit becomes an active part of our life, guiding and prompting us towards godliness.

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<sup>19</sup> Bryant Myers, *Walking with the Poor: Principles and Practice of Transformational Development* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999) 62.

<sup>20</sup> 2 Corinthians 5-6

### Reconciled to the Each other

Our relationship to others is often filled with discord, division, manipulation, distrust and more. Human life is filled with broken relationships on various levels, whether they are within a family, within friendships neighbors, communities or even nations.

At its worst these broken relationships lead to violence, racism, oppression, slavery, dominance, social stratification, self centeredness, exploitation and more.

**“Poverty is a result of relationships that do not work, that are not just, that are not for life, that are not harmonious or enjoyable. Poverty is the absence of shalom in all its meanings.”<sup>21</sup>**

Jesus called for the most radical of reconciliation between humans. To love your enemies, give of yourself, seek restored relationships, to love your neighbor as yourself are all part of God’s call for reconciled relationships between the humans he created to worship Him.

### Reconciled to Self (restored identity)

We are created in God’s image. Each human has worth and dignity. Each has a role to play in the mission of God.

And yet, for a number of reasons people tend toward two extremes when looking at “self”. One is the lack of self worth, in which we are unable to comprehend any value or worth in the person God created us to be. Through years of community oppression, family problems, violence to ourselves, mental issues and more, a pit has been dug which seems difficult, or impossible, to climb out of. Day runs into day with little hope of finding any meaning in what we do or who we are

The other extreme is a god complex; the idea that we ourselves are god and can make decisions for others. We think we have been uniquely gifted, with education and seemingly unlimited resources, and are capable of saving humankind. If only others knew what we knew, and had what we had, all would be well. God Himself is pushed out, and those with a god complex “know” how to fix the world. This too is an extremely broken self-view.

### Reconciled to the World

God created the world, and it was good. His role for human beings is to be good stewards of this world. Yet, humans have not been good stewards. In the name of materialism, greed, and often, downright survival, humans have neglected the earth and failed to see it as the creation of God. The end result has been deterioration in health, quality of life, inequality of land ownership, misuse of land, exploitation between those in power and those who don’t have power or position.

### If poverty truly includes:

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<sup>21</sup> Bryant Myers, *Walking with the Poor: Principles and Practice of Transformational Development* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999) 62.

- Broken relationship with God
- Broken relationship with others
- Broken relationship with self
- Broken relationship with the world

**Then who is truly poor?**

- Would the people you are traveling to for “service” be any more impoverished than the members of your team?
- If poverty is seen not just from a material viewpoint, but includes all of the above, in what ways are the members of your team poor?
- What types of poverty might you confront while on your trip?
- How could this realization change how you approach this trip? How do you set priorities for the trip?”
- Create a list of expectations with your team of what you hope to “accomplish” on this trip. Categorize them:

- Reconciliation of relationship ...

Host

With God...

With others...

With self...

With the world...

- Is there any area you are missing? Why? Might it be important to consider a holistic approach to this trip, including confronting your own poverty?
- How might this shape your team’s plans for this trip?



## What Do You Have?

Our role as followers of Christ is to participate in the reconciliation of human beings to God, others, self and the world.

All of us experience poverty in some form or other. On a mission trip we come with our brokenness to people who are broken and, in community, encourage each other in the restoration of broken relationships. We do this in complete humility, not as people hoping to fix someone else's problem or act as the blessed ones who have come to save the unblessed. We don't come in as experts, but as learners in this entire process.

God is at work in the world – restoring relationships and drawing people into his Kingdom.

In the broadest sense of “Mission” – remember we ask the question:

- How might the church join the life-giving work of God's Kingdom?
- Where is God at work?
  - Everywhere. He has always been at work in all corners of the earth.
- Who does God invite to join him in His work?
  - Everyone. God invites us to be involved with Him and His work.
- Where are their pressing needs?
  - Everywhere

One of the questions mission team leaders typically ask is: **What do THEY need?**

**Self-sustainability comes from people realizing the need and working together to resolve those issues with the assets they have (if possible).**

Is this the right question? Or does this question really mean ... what is wrong with you and how can I fix you?

**A better question might be,** “What does your ministry/community/society already have as an asset and how can we as a team come to enhance what is already going on?”

This is a very different way to go about creating a ministry plan for a mission trip.



Make a list of questions to ask the ministry or people group with whom you will partner. Consider:

1. What are the assets of the ministry/community we are going to visit?
2. What is your church/ministry doing in your community outside of the church?
3. What needs are in the community that must be addressed? What problems are there?
4. Does your church/ministry/community have assets to address those needs and problems?
5. How can we as a group of fellow believers encourage you in this?

**Remember, needs span physical, social, mental and spiritual dimensions.** <sup>22</sup>

- **Physical:** There ARE physical needs. Around 1 billion people living on less than \$1/day; 1.6 billion on less than \$2/day. <sup>23</sup>
  - Estimates from relief organizations state that between 16,000-25,000 children die every day from hunger & preventable diseases. These physical realities are a consequence of much greater systemic issues.
  - Billions of people live with inadequate nutrition, medical care, clean water and housing.<sup>24</sup>
- **Social:** Roles reinforced by society's systems perpetuate injustice. Governmental, societal, and family structures may all impact individuals and communities in negative ways, which keep people trapped. In India, it's the caste system; in North America, it's class-ism. Human trafficking continues to be a huge issue in our world today, spanning individual country's systems, impacting more than 25 million current-day slaves.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Bryant Myers, *Walking with the Poor: Principles and Practice of Transformational Development* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999) 67.

<sup>23</sup> Information from [www.worldvision.org](http://www.worldvision.org), [www.worldrelief.org](http://www.worldrelief.org) and [www.thehungersite.com](http://www.thehungersite.com).

<sup>24</sup> Sider, Ronald J., *Rich Christians in the Age of Hunger: Moving from Affluence to Generosity* (Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson, April 12, 2005).

<sup>25</sup> Meyers, Bryant, *Walking with the Poor: Principles and Practice of Transformational Development* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999) 20-56.

- **Mental:** Remember not to diminish the reality of debilitated mental states of poor who are affected by malnutrition and disease. There is a type of poverty that runs deeper than a lack of knowledge or technical information. It is the feeling of hopelessness which comes from a poverty of being – marred identity. The poor who do not have basic necessities, who suffer from systemic injustice, can have a distorted view of who they really are. From circumstances and relationships the poor may have a difficult time understanding what it means to be human, to be made in the image of God. Their history can become a limitation, the messages they remember, and their experiences with the non-poor often do not line up with the truth of their identity as dearly loved children of God.<sup>26</sup>
- **Spiritual:** There is power in the spirit world and its impact on keeping the poor, poor. Shamans or witch doctors perpetuate fear through spiritual tradition, mistrust is fed in the context of deeply engrained cultural belief systems. The truth is that the spiritual battle is real. As Paul writes in Ephesians 6, we are not fighting against powers of flesh and blood, alone... we confront spiritual powers in their cosmic and social dimensions. People are trapped in sin, and the consequence of sin impact families, communities and generations.<sup>27</sup>

In dialog with the place you hope to serve, identify pressing needs in terms of the physical, social, mental and spiritual categories. The goal of your interaction in this cross-cultural setting is not to “fix the problem” but to figure out how to work together to respond in ways that are sustainable, that utilize the assets that already exist in the location.

There may be a point when support from outside sources may be needed for self-sufficiency to take place. This is where you come in. Your team may have some education, or expertise, to help move the process along, but the physical/financial support must be very short-term to avoid creating an environment of dependency.

Knowing how to do this takes time, experience and cultural knowledge. It would be extremely important for your team to be connected with people who have experience in community and international ministry development. It takes years to learn how to do this well, and even then it is difficult. Be sure to draw support for your team from people who know language and culture to make sure decisions are appropriate within the culture and in a cross-cultural context.

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

### Assessing Options

It's good to assess ministries you are interested in doing to see how well they match up with where you are going. For example:

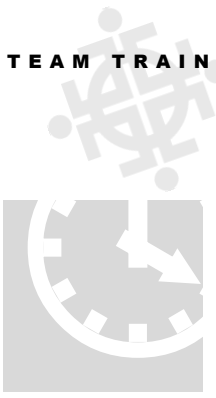
1. The mission team is planning to present a children's program. How is the local church involved in designing and presenting the program? How involved are the adults and youth of the church in participating in the program? What is the plan for the local church to follow up on the children and families touched by the program? Is there a long-term plan for the church and children? How will your group be able to help the church plan and implement their own children's program, in which your team only comes to encourage and support?
2. The mission team is planning to build a new church building. What investment is the local church making into the building? Who created the plans for the church and who is in charge of construction? How will the building be maintained? Is this really something the local church wants, or are they just allowing you to build it to make you feel useful? Would the local church be able to build it on their own? Are there ways to help the local church raise enough money, to build their own church?

As you plan for your mission experience, create a list of questions to identify assets and needs in the community. Think through every ministry idea you currently have and evaluate its long-term impact on the community and whether or not it is self-sustainable.

This evaluation should go all the way to the smallest detail of the trip. What crafts are you making? Can that church duplicate them? What food are you serving? Is this something the church people can make? In what little ways might you be creating dependency in the community?

#### **The worst things that can happen would be:**

1. The local church waits for you to return to continue the ministry YOU started.
2. The local church waits for you to send funds, or return, to continue construction on a project.
3. People in the community only get involved in the local ministry when the foreigners are around, because that is when it is "fun" or "we get free stuff."



## Why Am I Going?

This is an important question to ask. **Motivation is paramount.** Motivation will lead one toward a healthy, or unhealthy, role in a mission trip. It would be good for each participant to evaluate motivation for participating.

**Here are some unhealthy motives for going on a mission trip.**

### Tourism and Adventure

A lot of us desire to go on another mission trip to recreate the good feelings and mountaintop experience we had before. They bounce from one mission trip to another in order to experience as much of the world and adventure as possible. People give God's money to them so they can have these experiences. Is that really good stewardship?

Mission trips will take you places normal travel agencies will not. You will be immersed in a culture in a unique and personal way. You will see places more from the eyes of a local, than if you went to a hotel resort.

This is all well and good, but should it be done under the guise of a "mission" trip? Should God's money be used for your own personal adventure? Is it appropriate for the community you visit, and the people in it, to be used as your own personal National Geographic moment?

I know you would say "no." However, sometimes we allow ourselves to get caught in this trap.

Here are some questions to ask your group:

1. Are we visiting this location because it is geographically pleasing, or because God called us there?
2. Is the tourism aspect of our trip more important than our connection with the people we are going to spend time with?
3. Are we spending an inordinate amount of money on tourist activities that would shock the local people?
4. Are we going on another mission trip just because we had such an amazing experience on a previous one?

### I'll Fix It

As mentioned before we see so many global issues on TV. We read newspapers, magazines and websites and discover needs all over the world. We know there are problems and God has given us hearts to go out and change the world for the better.

**Nothing in mission is quick. Nothing can be fixed in one week.**

This is a godly attitude in many ways, but often our own cultural bias gets in the way. An attitude of superiority gets in the way. There are many who feel if the rest of the world followed North America's lead everyone would be better off.

We have to remember what we have already learned about poverty and our role in poverty alleviation. We need to humble ourselves in the sight of the Lord and allow ourselves to build relationship, and wait, and learn and be led by others we may not understand, instead of giving in to the desire of the quick fix.

Nothing in mission is quick. Nothing can be fixed in one week.

Ask yourself these questions:

1. When you hear about the needs in the area you will be visiting, do you have the urge to come up with plans to fix the problem?
2. Do you tend to see things from a North American viewpoint and disregard the viewpoint of other cultures?
3. Do you tend to have a US is #1 attitude about the world, both economically and in ministry?

**The Doer**

The reason many people go on mission trips is to get something done. Few people are willing to take a week off of work, and raise over \$1000, and not get "something accomplished". The desire to complete a task is so important in our society. If we don't complete the project we tend to see ourselves as failures. In the context of a mission trip, we wonder what we'll tell the people back home if we don't get 'something' done?

**Few people are willing to take a week off of work, and raise over \$1000, and not get something accomplished.**

This tendency is evident in construction projects. Many men go on trips with great plans and work hard to complete what they started. Interestingly what is built is not always what the local people really wanted. Instead the locals allow the foreigners to do what they want, so they feel good about themselves. In these instances, the projects end up being unused shells for years, but the visitors sure were happy!

The "doing" dilemma also occurs in ministry. Often a team is so intent on presenting "a specific ministry" they are unable, or unwilling, to notice that what they are doing is not effective at all. The people in the community don't really care, but it is fun to watch the foreigners do their tricks. The inability to be flexible, and to really, truly follow the lead of local leadership turns us into doers.

1. Is accomplishing something the reason you are going on the trip?
2. Would the trip be worth it if you didn't complete a task, but ended up developing relationships and learning something?
3. Do you feel uncomfortable allowing people from another culture dictate what you should or should not do?

### **Kumbaya**

Many people go on mission trips to connect with God. In many ways a mission trip takes you out of your environment (WAY out of your environment) and can allow you to meet God in a different way. You get tired, dirty, uncomfortable, and are out of your element.

This is why mission trips are such an important tool for youth pastors. Even more than a camp experience, youth pastors love to get their students away from home and challenge them with facing the material poverty and difficulty many people face around the world. Or allow their students to meet people content in their relationship in Christ, and yet not have the same material benefits people in North America have.

For this reason many teams focus on their debriefing times as paramount in their trip. All of the time spent in reflection, prayer, reading the Bible, and hashing-and rehashing-and rehashing what they experienced that day is of utmost importance on the trip.

Interestingly these same teams will miss opportunities from God to do ministry, develop relationships, or touch people's lives, because they are so self-focused. The trip is all about their own experience, instead of encouraging the lives and God-relationship of others. These are teams that think they have a week to figure out all of the lessons to be learned, but have no plan for follow-up. Once they get home they are off to the next experience.

1. Is this trip about you or about touching other's lives?
2. Is your trip schedule so focused on debriefing and devos that you might be missing opportunities to spend time with people from the community or time participating in ministry with them?
3. Are you looking more forward to bonding with your own team members than you are the people you are visiting?

### **Conquerors**

God has called us to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. That gets us excited! Going into the world, to unreached people groups, to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ and have them respond is incredible!

**The desire to lead people to Christ is wonderful when it is strongly within us, as the Holy Spirit prompts us.**

Where are these unreached people groups? How many are left? Oh, wait a minute. You mean there are more believers in Latin America and Africa than there are in North America? Wait a minute. I thought we were going to share John 3:16 with people who have never heard it before. Why does that kid have 25 wordless book bracelets?

The desire to lead people to Christ is wonderful when it is strongly within us, as the Holy Spirit prompts us. The reality is our own community is the one God most calls us to share Christ with. We are unprepared and lack experience to go into another culture and properly lead someone to a relationship with Christ in a way that would have long-lasting impact, unless we work hand-in-hand with someone from the culture.

People in other cultures are very polite. They will give their lives to Jesus, if you ask, because they want you to feel good about your visit. Is that evangelism?

1. Is “how many souls get saved” really a number you are going to use to determine the effectiveness of your mission trip?
2. Are the ministries you are participating in under the leadership, partnership and follow up plan of a local ministry you can count on?
3. Do you think the community you are visiting is really an unreached people group? Are you sure?

There is nothing wrong with wanting to see God’s creation and the many cultures he created or to have a heart for the materially and spiritually poor and want to pull them out of their despair. It’s not bad to want to accomplish something for Christ using the support of dozens of Christians you know or to want to grow stronger in your relationship with Jesus. There is nothing wrong with wanting to ask people if they want to give their lives to Jesus.

The problem is much of the motivation innate in those motivations is about self. I want to see the world. I want to help someone and feel good about myself in my wealth. I want to accomplish something. I want to get closer to God. I want to evangelize someone.

“I”

It’s all about me and what I want.

## Healthy motivations for going on a mission trip tend to be “others-” and “God-” oriented.

Let’s explore some of these:

### The Guest

I am visiting another country where I may have never been before. I am a visitor and out of my element. Therefore I will be careful how I act, careful how I dress, careful how I treat property and homes. I will do my best to fit into the local culture. I will learn in advance how to do that and keep my eyes open while I am there to learn how to be appropriate.

Tourists tend to want to be served and expect things to be a certain way. Guests tend to be inconspicuous, humble, gentle, appreciative, and do everything they can to not be a bother to the host. Guests don’t want to get in the way. They just want to fit into the current system, the established program, and join in.

Guests wash the dishes, clean up after themselves, help cook if possible, and are thankful for everything. Guests don’t expect, or even desire, special treatment.

Guests allow the local person to be in charge and set the agenda. They follow the lead of others and do things on the host’s terms.

1. Would you consider your attitude for this trip to be one of a guest?
2. How is being a guest “others-” and “God-” oriented?
3. What might you do to develop the attitude of a guest on this trip?

### The Encourager

What will you “accomplish” on a mission trip? What will have the most long-lasting impact from your visit? Possibly the most important aspect of your trip will be encouraging a group of people in another culture by visiting them, learning about their culture, loving them, praying for them and letting them know they are important in the eyes of God and in the world-wide Body of Christ. The best thing to hear from a person you are visiting is “I am so thankful you came so far to spend time with us. You have encouraged us to continue on in the ministry God has called us to do.”

Doers and conquerors are looking for something concrete to brag about (or feel good about). Encouragers are “others” oriented. Their personal needs or feelings are not most important. They have to feel like they finished something or made a huge “impact” on the world. They just come to share the love of Christ with everyone they come in contact with.



Encouragement is important for all of us, including people living in material poverty, or struggling in an area where people are closed to the Gospel, or overworked pastors languishing in places around the world.

1. What is your plan to encourage the people you are visiting on this trip?
2. Are you able to feel comfortable with the idea of not having tangible “results” from your mission trip? Why or why not?
3. Are the feelings of the people you are visiting of utmost importance to you, so that your own expectations and goals are of little concern?

**The Partner**

To partner with an international ministry in a healthy way is tricky. So often our own cultural values and goals get in the way. There is pressure on the home front, and from our own personality to dominate partnership with people of other cultures. It is inherent in our cultural aggressiveness and wealth.

**The best partnership is to find leaders with holistic views of ministry within their congregation and to the community.**

Partnering with people of another culture helps us learn to let go of control. Who really should be in charge of the local decision-making process? The team who brings the money and “expertise” with them, or the local people who grew up in the culture and know exactly what is going on? The truth is, the best decision-makers for ministry and projects in a community are the locals themselves.

For the mission team the best partnership is to find local leaders in the culture they are entering with holistic views of ministry within their congregation and community; local leaders who are trustworthy and are already doing ministry for the members of their church and community. The mission team’s job is to come alongside the local leadership, submit to its authority, and participate in what they are invited to participate in. Approaching the “task” of mission with this attitude and action shows respect for people, for ministries, for cultures.

In this model, there is no place for a sense of cultural superiority, or creating dependence.

1. Who is making the decisions for what your trip is going to be like and what you are going to do?
2. Is the ministry you are partnering with already highly involved in holistic work in their community? In what ways?
3. How will your visit enhance their ministry and further along their goals as a ministry?

### **The Relationship Builder**

People are more important than projects; bottom line. Never, ever is a construction project, or a planned ministry, more important than spending time with people in the church, the community, or in local ministries. If a trip is solely focused on building something, it is totally missing the point of what a mission trip really is about. Focusing only on the project means missing out on the richness of the Body of Christ and anything that truly will have a long-lasting impact.

Obviously building a long-term relationship with people of another culture, and speaking another language in one week is basically impossible. However, there are ways to connect on a human and Christian level. To smile, to learn a few words of their language, to learn a skill they feel proud of, to eat together, worship together, see photos of each other's children together, and even be invited to live in the same home together, are all ways of connecting, all ways of building relationship.

1. In what ways is your team planning to develop relationships with people of the community you are visiting?
2. In what ways are you making sure people are more important than projects?
3. What temptations might there be to hide behind the safety of a program or project in order to not have to interact with the people you are visiting?

### **Be Creative**

There is more to mission trips than construction projects and children's ministry, although that is what the majority of the people going on short-term trips think.

Figure out the giftedness, experience, education, and passions of your team before you decide what your team is going to do. Create a list of meaningful ways your team members can contribute to the mission.

Reflect on how the local ministry is at work in their community and see how the gifts and experiences of your team may enhance ministry already happening.

The backgrounds of the millions of people going on mission trips are astounding. If only they would use that giftedness and talent to further the Gospel of Jesus abroad. Think outside the box of so many mission trips that focus on construction or children's ministries, unless you do construction and children's ministries at home!

**Brainstorm.** Challenge each other. Be creative. Give the mission team coordinator, or pastor, or missionary, a list of what you can do, and do well. One of you may have the exact gifts a community has been waiting for. This is scarier than hiding behind the safety of building a wall, or interacting with children. It just may actually have some impact.

1. Did your team decide in advance what your team was going to do or did the leader wait to find out who was going and then inquire as to the gifts and talents of the team before deciding what to do?
2. Are your gifts, talents and experience going to be utilized on this trip? How or how not?
3. Does the host understand the breadth of possibilities a mission can provide to enhance their ministry? How have they shown that, or not?



### **The Learning Aspect: Make a plan!**

For your team the most valuable part of the trip will be the learning that will take place on the trip. In fact it may be the only long-term impactful thing that will take place. More than likely, a common goal of short-term mission experiences is the life-change in those who participate. There is actually a problem with that goal. Studies have shown after six months few people have any changed behavior as a result of going on a mission trip.<sup>28</sup> Rather than being a transforming experience, a mission trip becomes the “in” thing to do; a way to show how spiritual you are. It becomes a mountaintop experience that quickly fades, like camp. As soon as you get home you return to the life you always lived, the way you used to live it. We need to be good stewards of the resources and time we are given. If there is no long-term impact or plan to continue to be transformed by the time abroad, it is important to evaluate if your group’s time and money could be better utilized.

Mission experiences, at their best, transform the lives of those who participate, and bring about positive, healthy relationship in the place a team travels. Accountability is key – for the lives of those who “go” and for the resources used to “get there”. There must be a favorable result among the participating members, for our church, and for our communities that comes out of these trips, otherwise we are wasting God’s money.

### **How do we do that?**

#### **Prepare**

So much can be learned on a trip by preparing with the team. Praying together. Learning Scripture together. Building relationships through preparing programs and even buying supplies together. Prepare in community.

Most Bible study leaders would agree they learn more preparing for a Bible study than the participants learn from attending it. Most pastors would say they learn more preparing for a sermon than the congregation does hearing it. Mission team members learn more by preparing diligently a mission trip together than the receivers ever will.

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<sup>28</sup> Robert Priest, Terry Dischinger, Steve Ramussen, C. M. Brown article, “Researching the Short-Term Mission Movement”, *Missiology*, 34:4, October 2006, pp 431-50.

1. What is your team's plan for preparation for the trip?
2. Are all of the team's members on board with the importance of preparing together for the trip? If not, how might you help them understand the importance of preparation? Are you willing to make preparation a mandatory requirement?

### **Practical Steps for Team Prep**

#### **Build a Team**

Building community within a mission team is essential. It influences every part of a short-term mission experience. In the process of team-building, participants get to know each other and they learn to trust one another. Things will go “wrong” during a mission trip, and the strength of relationships within the team will impact responses to what happens.

Spending time together to build your team is essential to being able to learn on a trip. Developing relationships within your church group can change your future and change your church. The bonding that comes from preparing for a trip, going on it, and then following up on it can build a lifetime of connection with people. Take advantage of that.

1. What is your group doing intentionally to build your team?
2. What can you do to connect with each individual on the team before you go?
3. What can you do to build trust between the members of the team?

#### **Culture**

Developing cross-cultural sensitivity is another essential component of short-term mission. Take time to learn about the country, the region, and the city you are traveling to. What is the history of the area? Why are circumstances as they are? Look for books to help you understand cross-cultural communication and ministry for the local context. Spend time reading history or sociological books about the culture you are planning to visit. How about inviting people who live near you, and are from that culture, so spend time with your team and share insights with you? If you are doing ministry alongside missionaries, what information do they have about the cultural context or what books do they recommend you read?

Being culturally sensitive to the people you are going to spend time with is essential in doing healthy ministry. Learning about customs, history, geography, and what has been going on in the church in that area, are important lessons to be learned. What you learn about the cultural setting in another country may actually be helpful for you at home, as you look at the people around the city in which you live.

Is your team going to participate in any learning activities? Utilize the tools in the section on **Cultural Sensitivity**.

1. In what ways is your team planning to prepare to be culturally sensitive to the people you are going to be with on your mission trip?
2. Who might be resource people from whom you can learn the history, geography and culture of the country and people you will be visiting?

## **Debrief**

### **What is your team's debriefing plan?**

There is an interesting balance between debriefing too much and too little on a mission trip. Some teams schedule their trip around debriefing times for their group. When debrief times are protected too much, a group may miss out on valuable times to build relationships or partner with the host ministry. Guarding time with your mission team may become very self-serving, and can make one wonder if the trip is about “me” or the trip is about “God” and “others.”

However, not spending time in reflection on the trip will inhibit possible revelations about God and how He is working in the world. Some people need time to verbalize what they have seen and what they wonder about. Usually it is best to choose someone who has experience in cross-cultural ministry to lead these times of reflection. Often they have better insight into what the team is experiencing and lead teams away from some of the inaccurate first-impressions a team member can have (“they are so poor yet so happy,” “why are they so spiritual while people in the North America are not,” “I am going to appreciate everything I have when I get home” etc.). A facilitator who can challenge some of these early impressions can get more at the root of what is really being discovered.

The discovery of Godly truths during trips, and how to apply them to our lives, is fundamental to the success of mission trips.

1. What are your team's debriefing plans? Who will lead them?
2. What resources are you using for debriefing? Are they challenging or just justifying stereotypes that often result from a short-term mission experience?

Utilize the tools in the sections on **“Spiritual Growth”** and **“Cultural Sensitivity”**.

## Follow-up

Possibly the most critical, and underutilized, aspect of mission trips today is follow-up. Healthy teams ask for a commitment to the team before the trip (for preparation and team building), during the trip, and after the trip (for follow up). Follow-up is more than a dinner and photos for the congregation after the trip. Follow-up involves critical meetings necessary for further discovery after a mission trip. Follow up meetings give team members time to reflect further on lessons learned, and provide the space for conversation about life-behavior changes confronting the team during the mission experience. These meetings set the stage for deeper relationship, for mutual accountability, for ongoing transformation.

As mentioned before, recent studies have shown six months after a mission trip most people behave exactly the same ways they did, toward God, missions, their own community, their church, and cross-cultural ministry as they did before the trip. Even though participants say the trip changed their lives, they do not act differently. Obviously this is not true 100% of the time, because we all know people whose lives changed due to a mission trip. However, we can increase the effectiveness of life-changing behavior in our relationship with Christ, and his people, if we take the time AFTER the trip to connect as teams and hold each other accountable.

1. What commitment has your team members made for AFTER the mission trip to reflect, share what they have learned and struggle with, and be accountable to changes promised on the mission trip?
2. What resources will you use for these after-trip reflections? Utilize the tools in the sections in **“Mission—Then and Now”**.

## Put what you learned into action

Millions of dollars are spent on short-term mission trips each year. As we “go” in short-term mission, we need to think about what it means to be a good steward of the money we spend along the way. A measure of good stewardship in short-term mission means that the trip changes lives, both on the receiving end and within the sending team. A way to quantify how successful your trip really was is to take into account how people on the team have, or have not, put what they learned on the trip into action. Make this a cornerstone of what your trip is about, especially after the trip. Utilize the tools in the sections on **“Mission—Then and Now”**.

## Expectations

The success or failure of the short-term mission experience is largely connected to the kind of expectations team members brought to the mission. If most of the expectations were met, they will consider the mission experience a success. If the trip did not measure up to the expectations of the team, they could feel like the mission was a failure. This may be a limited way of evaluating an experience, but such perspective affects the kind of reentry the team members will have.

It is very important, then, that expectations are realistic and shared with others on the team. The pre-departure orientation should cover the area of expectations: what they are, what to do when they are unmet, how and/or when to change expectations, etc. The post-return orientation should also cover the same topics.

Although participants are encouraged to expect great things from God, they may not be ready for mundane experiences. There should be a balance between expecting great things from God and having realistic expectations about the mission experience and about their return back home. Nothing is too insignificant for God to use to affect life-change...even lost luggage, cold showers, and bugs!

The other side of expectations is the reentry part. What ideas and dreams do team members have about returning home? Expectations may include positive or negative denial of life back home. Positive denial may include a glorified view of home, an inflated view of the mission experience or an exaggerated view of how one will cope back home. Negative denial, on the other hand, may include thinking that people will not be interested in their stories, anticipating depression, loneliness, and anger, or being immobile and unable to cope.

You can help team members develop realistic expectations about their reentry to their home culture. The following statements have been formulated to help short-term team members prepare for what realistic reentry may look like. Talk about them BEFORE, during and after the mission experience!

You will go through a re-adjustment period, parts of which may be difficult.

1. People will show initial excitement in my stories but will quickly diminish in their interest. I shouldn't be surprised or discouraged.
2. Stardom will feel great, but it is short-lived. Returning home may initially feel great, but I may feel alone at times and confused, sad, and misunderstood.
3. I should expect my renewed faith to be tested, tried and strengthened.
4. During the lonely times, I can expect God to be with me to comfort and guide me through this transition time. (Psalm 23) Be honest! It's OK to hit some lows.



## SAFE-ARI vs. MISSION-ARI

This is an activity to illustrate proper attitudes on a mission trip.

Have half of the people on your team be “nationals” and the other half mission team members. Then split the mission team members into two teams: the SAFE-ARI team and the MISSION-ARI team. Split the “nationals” in half and assign one to interact with the safe-ari team and the other with the mission-ari team. Nationals are unable to speak English. The team members can speak English.

### Act One

#### Safe-ari Team

- Pretend you are getting out of a van at the ministry site and are afraid of the nationals as they come toward you. Stick together near the van, or get back in it.
- Nationals (assigned to Safe-ari team): show disappointment at the lack of greetings and trust from the safe-ari members.

#### Mission-ari Team

- Get out of the van and immediately engage the nationals in conversation and greetings.
- Nationals (assigned to mission-ari team) – engage with the mission-ari members and show pleasure at their interest.

### Act Two

#### Safe-ari

- Immediately chase the nationals, taking photos of them.
- Nationals: run away and hide.

#### Mission-ari

- Notice the nationals participating in a national ritual and join in.
- Nationals: start a national dance ritual and invite the team to join you.

### Act Three

#### Safe-ari

- Run after the nationals, telling them you need to save them.
- Nationals: run away!

#### Mission-ari

- Encourage the nationals in the what they are already doing.
- Nationals: show the team what your life is like and how you survive.



**Act Four**

**Safe-ari**

- Team members start bossing around the nationals to get them to learn how to hop on one leg.
- Nationals: allow the team to boss you around, although you don't like it.

**Mission-ari**

- Allow the nationals to teach you how to do something.
- Nationals: Teach the team how to do something.

**Act Five**

**Safe-ari**

- Get in the van praising God for all of the things you were able to do to help those poor nationals. Pat each other on the back for a great job.
- Nationals: as soon as the team gets in the van get back to your normal life.

**Mission-ari**

- Hug and thank the nationals, praying with them. Comment on how much you learned from the nationals.
- Nationals: hug and wave good-bye to the team, and show a new sense of national unity when they leave.

**Questions for reflection**

- How did the two groups act differently?
- How do you think mission teams act like either of the groups?
- What does this teach us about our attitudes concerning mission trips?

**SAFE-ARI teams:**

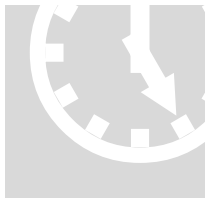
- tend to focus on have a great experience.
- tend to focus on Tourist events and having an adventure in mission.
- make decisions based on fear.
- have a sense of urgency to save everyone and meet everyone's needs.
- tend to be culturally ignorant.
- have a sense of superiority and expertise.
- praise themselves for what a great job they did on the mission trip.

**MISSION-ARI teams:**

- tend to show trust in the host culture and leaders.
- act like guest, are polite, and participate in the local culture.
- are servants.
- encourage others.
- learn how to be culturally sensitive and blend in.
- are willing to learn from the host culture.
- realize God has given them an opportunity for partnership and relationship.

What if Jesus would have gone on a Safe-ari, rather than be a Mission-ari?

- How would He have acted differently on earth?
- In what ways did Jesus act like a Mission-ari?



**Elevator Etiquette**

The rules of space and proximity are well defined in different cultures. Read the following and answer the questions according to the customs of your culture.

**Discuss with your group:**

Imagine that you are in a crowded elevator in an office building in the United States. All of the other occupants are unknown to you.

Have them act it out! Point to the imaginary elevator door. Have them “push” the button, wait, and enter.

- What are the rules are for standing in the elevator? How do people stand when there are only two or three people? What happens when a fourth person enters the elevator?
- How would you feel if there were two people on the elevator and a third person entered and stood right next to you?
- What happens when the elevator becomes more crowded and there are now four or more people?
- How close do people stand?
- What do people look at in a crowded elevator?
- When is it permissible to talk to the other people?

### **Response to Elevator Etiquette**

Elevator behavior in the United States is very rigid:

- If there are only two or three people on an elevator, each person usually leans against the walls. If a fourth person boards the elevator, the four corners are normally occupied. This would be a breach of our personal “space.”
- When there are more than four people on an elevator, the occupants begin to follow a complex set of rules for behavior. Everyone turns to face the door. Hands, purses, and briefcases hang down in front of the body.
- People don’t touch each other in any way unless the elevator becomes very crowded, and then they only touch at the shoulders or upper arms.
- Everyone usually looks at the lighted floor indicator.
- It is unusual for people (who are strangers) to speak to each other in an elevator unless they are sharing some kind of similar experience. (Such as a conference) People who do know each other will usually speak softly. When a group of people enter the elevator and do not follow these rules, other occupants usually feel very uncomfortable.
- If you think this behavior is overstated? The next time you are on an elevator, don’t face the door. Turn and face the occupants. If you really want to upset everyone, give them a broad smile.
- In every culture there are unwritten rules. Be an observer and learner first!



## Health, Culture and Safety in 60 seconds

### Preparation:

Each team member should have a piece of paper and pencil. Tell the members you are going to say 34 statements in less than 60 seconds. After you are finished, you will say “go” and they have 3 minutes to write down as many statements as they can remember. At the end, you will explain each of the statements in detail and the one with the most written down receives a snack from you on the trip.

1. Count group members
2. Stay in groups
3. Get sleep
4. Drink Water
5. Not from the faucet
6. Wear Sunscreen
7. Wear a hat
8. Eat food given to you
9. Don't make faces
10. Don't Flush TP
11. Unclog your own toilet
12. Wear bug spray
13. Don't leave food out
14. Stomach Issues Happen
15. If sick, tell a leader
16. Too much Imodium equals bad news
17. Don't Panic
18. Don't be a flirt
19. If you're dating someone, I should be surprised
20. No Smoking, drugs, drinking or carrying firearms
21. Develop relationships before photos
22. No Dancing
23. Give-Aways go through the local ministry
24. Don't let children in your rooms
25. Don't let children use your things
26. Don't make any other promise than to pray
27. Invite people to eat with you.
28. Use as much language of the host culture that you know
29. Always greet people
30. Give special attention to Pastors and Directors
31. Stay off your phone
32. Save kumbaya time for later
33. Don't take over the road
34. Know that what you wear DOES affect the ministry



## Health Culture and Safety Explanations

1. Count group members
  - Wherever you go, make sure you have everyone!
2. Stick together
  - Minors must not leave the mission site unless with an adult
  - When shopping, stay in groups
  - When going off site stay in groups of four or more
  - Never leave a site without obtaining permission from your group leader
  - Males should always accompany females
3. Get sleep
  - Your body needs more sleep when you are in a new situation
  - Remember that sleep is one of the best ways to prevent illness
  - Others around you may require more sleep, respect your team and the community
  - Whether you are an “early bird” or a “night owl”, not everyone is! Respect quiet hours
4. Drink Water
  - Dehydration is the number one cause of illness, so drink all of the time
  - Bring a personal water bottle that you can refill
5. Don't drink out of any faucet.
  - Bottled drinks and ice purchased in restaurants and stores are ok
  - When taking showers keep your mouth closed
  - When brushing your teeth used bottled water to rinse out your mouth
  - Always have enough water for your group to drink. Take water breaks often.
  - Encourage your group members to drink water, instead of soft drinks.
  - Do not open the community water thermos.
6. Wear Sunscreen
  - In most locations, you are closer to the equator and need to wear sunscreen
  - Sunburn and sun stroke is nothing to play around with
7. Wear a Hat
  - When working or walking, wear a hat to shield you from the sun
8. Eat food given to you
  - Eat food provided for you or in restaurants suggested by Merge or your trip facilitator
  - Don't eat at roadside stands

- If your church's pastor or church members invite your group for a meal the food hopefully will be safe. It would be rude to not accept their invitation.
- Always wash your hands before eating. You can wash your hands in the tap water with soap - this is perfectly safe. Just be sure to dry your hands before touching food.
- Food is a very important part of the culture. You must eat the food given to you by our hosts.

9. Don't Make Faces

- Don't forget that even though others may not understand the words from your mouth, they will understand your facial expressions!
- Body language translates in all cultures

10. Toilets

- Do not flush toilet paper or feminine products
- There is a trash can by every toilet for paper products
- The sewage pipes are not the same as in the US, so cannot accommodate paper products

11. Unclog your own toilet

- It is not your host's responsibility to unclog your toilet.
- Plungers will be available

12. Wear bug spray

- Bring bug spray and medicine for insect bites.
- Bring first-aid lotions to apply to bug-bite affected areas

13. Don't leave food out

- Don't leave food or candy out of containers.
- Do not leave food or candy in your sleeping areas.

14. Stomach Issues Happen


- Stomach illness does not mean that you ate "bad food". It means your body is not accustomed to the new food.
- Most missionaries experience problems with their stomach on re-entry to the US because they are not used to the rich, greasy food.

15. If sick, tell a leader

- If you are sick, please make sure to tell the leaders right away. It is important that your hosts know. They are most knowledgeable about healthcare in the area.

16. Too much Imodium equals bad news!

- Imodium only stops the symptoms; it does NOT get rid of the cause.
- Let your body get rid of what it doesn't like! It may be embarrassing or inconvenient, but the natural course of diarrhea is 24 hours.
- Drink plenty of liquids so you don't dehydrate.

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17. Don't Panic
    - Pretty self-explanatory! Panic spreads quickly and is not helpful.
  18. Don't be a flirt!
    - Flirtatiousness by team member females toward Latin males is often interpreted as a serious sexual advance.
    - Flirtatiousness by team males toward Latin females is often interpreted as a prelude to a possible marriage relationship.
  19. If dating someone, I should be surprised
    - Do not allow boyfriend/girlfriend relationships to begin on mission trips
    - If you are dating a member of the team, your relationship should be so "above board" that if told you are dating, I should be surprised!
  20. No Smoking, drugs, drinking or carrying firearms
    - In most Christian cultures, these are not acceptable behaviors for Christians
  21. No Dancing
    - Check with your host to see if dancing is appropriate in the Christian culture. In some, it is not.
  22. Develop Relationships before photos
    - Photos & video can be taken, but after relationships are developed
    - We are not tourists looking for our "National Geographic" picture
    - It is much more meaningful to have photos of people that you have a relationship with and can share their story.
  23. Give-Aways go through the Local Ministry
    - Purchasing a gift for the pastor & his/her family is appropriate. Purchasing a gift for a family you will be staying with is also appropriate as well. A recommended gift item is a gift that represents the place in the world you come from
    - It is rarely appropriate to financially support a church, ministry or individual after your trip is over.
    - Giving donations or gifts is trickier than you may think in another culture. There are inter-personal, cultural, and ministry issues involved in gift giving that you may not understand. If you desire to purchase a gift for a national, be sure to check with your host first to find out if and what type of gift giving is appropriate.
    - If the host missionary cautions you against giving gifts (i.e. toys to children who come to a program), please listen to them and respect what they have to say – and don't give gifts away.
    - It is appropriate to give a gift to someone who has provided you with housing, meals, the pastor or director of the ministry you have been working with, or the missionary host him- or herself.

- Do not give money to anyone unless you have consulted with the host missionary first.
- Do not give away personal items, such as watches or hats, because this may create jealousy or friction among those who have not received them.
- Indiscriminate handouts are destructive; but equally destructive is the habit of making promises. Do not promise any long-term favors (i.e. looking into bringing an individual home to the US for a visit or for schooling).
- Before collecting items, such as canned food, used clothing, etc, check with the host missionary to determine if it would be appropriate.
- Small gifts for friends made during the mission trip may be appropriate, but should be gifts of friendship that will not create begging or jealousy. If you make a bracelet for one person, make one for everyone. Photographs, bookmarks, even postcards from your home are nice gifts. They indicate a friendship rather than a demonstration of the difference between the haves and the have-nots.

24. Don't let children in your rooms

- As a safety issue, do not invite children into your sleeping area

25. Don't let children use your things

- Letting children use your camera or other things creates competition with other children

26. Don't make any other promise than to pray

- We want to be people of our word and do not know what tomorrow holds.
- Sometimes in the emotion of the moment, we want to promise things that in reality are not appropriate or feasible.
- Please do not even promise to write people. It is better for them to be excited and surprised you wrote than disappointed that you did not.
- Saying, "you should come visit me" is a promise on your part that you will help make that possible. That includes, expenses and VISA paperwork to get them there!
- Prayer is the one thing you can be sure to follow-through with. And don't forget, prayer is powerful!

27. Invite people to eat with you

- Accept all invitations to eat with the church members at church or in homes.
- Spend time talking to people from the host culture.
- Plan in your group schedule intentional times to get to know people.

28. Use all of the host language you know no matter how rudimentary

- This shows you are wanting to get to know people.



- “Please” and “thank-you” go a long way in the host language!
  - Be a learner! Let your hosts teach you their language. This is one of the biggest ways to build relationships.
  - Humble yourself! Yes, you are going to make mistakes. You are not offending your host, you are showing you are trying everything you can in order to share with them.
29. Always greet people
- Every time you enter a room, spend time to go around to greet everyone.
30. Give special attention to Pastors and Directors
- Ministry is hard work! We want to be an encouragement to those that are ministering in their community.
31. Stay off your phone
- The more you stay connected to your home culture, the less you are connected to the host culture. Be present in the moment that God has placed before you.
  - Plus, you are going to have a huge roaming charge bill upon your return!
32. Save kumbaya time for later
- When you are with your hosts, BE with your hosts. You have time for team building before your trip and after.
33. Don't take over the road
- Remember that pedestrians do NOT have the right-of-way
  - It can be very intimidating to see a huge group walking down the street together. Walk in a single-file line or in small groups.
34. Know that what you wear DOES affect the ministry
- We never want what we wear to be a barrier to ministry. Consult your host on what is appropriate.
  - Always model your way of dress by what the local pastor and spouse wear.
  - Some general guidelines:
    - Covered Parts
    - Mid-section
    - Shoulders
    - Chest
    - Knees (women)
    - No see through/sheer
    - No plain white t-shirts
    - No darkness (evil, disturbing, black, etc.)
    - Ask your host about piercings and tattoos



## Culture Shock

When people go on mission trips, even for one week, it is highly possible some members will experience a level of culture shock. Knowing the symptoms and how to deal with them can help your team be more effective. Talk with your team about each aspect and give them time to journal about where they feel they may have difficulties. Some signs of culture shock may include feeling:

### Frustrated

- Time: The local culture has a completely different sense of time than you do, and it is bothering you.
- Housing: Your housing is not what you are used to, and you don't feel comfortable in it. It is difficult to sleep.

### Confused

- Language: your lack of language skills are frustrating you and you don't want to talk to anyone.
- Ministry: the events you planned for your ministry are not going as you thought they would.
- Culture: you are having a hard time understanding why people in the local culture act as they do.

### Embarrassed

- Language: you are afraid to try to say anything in their language.
- Ways of doing things: you don't want to try anything new.

### Tension

- Are we prepared? Tension arises among team members as they try to present any programs. Anger and gossip grow between team members.

### Insecure

- Can I really do this? Wanting to just be alone and not participate anymore.

## The Ups and Downs of Missions

### First Days—Exciting, New, Learning

- Usually the first day or two of a mission trip is full of wonder and excitement. You are experiencing things for the first time, and seeing new places and people have energized everyone on the team.

### Middle Days—Tedious, Frustrating, Tiring

- Then reality sets in. Your ministries are not going as well as you hoped. Housing is difficult. You are tired and hungry. Conflicts arise among team members. You wonder how much longer the trip is going to be.

- These are the days of danger. Be aware that culture shock may be setting in.

**Final Days**—Encouraging, Relationships, Success

- If you deal with culture shock correctly, these are the best days of your trip, when you have built relationships, have been encouraged by and have encouraged your hosts, and things seem to be going smoother. You are getting in a rhythm, and don't want to go home.

**Ways to Cope**

There are different ways to cope with culture shock. You can:

- criticize the hosts and other members of your team.
- be impatient with your hosts and other members of your team.
- refuse to try something new.
- become inflexible sticking to your schedule without any ability to take advantage of new opportunities.
- withdraw—stay alone, away from the hosts and team members.

**Or you can:**

- learn: from the hosts and try to learn about their culture and life, which is confusing you.
- understand: why people do the things they do
- listen: to people sharing their lives with you
- ask questions: about life, culture, what is going on, etc.
- be flexible & available: taking advantage of new opportunities of ministry you have never had before.
- take risks: despite not wanting to, try something you would never normally do.
- be relational: don't allow yourself to withdraw, but stay connected with people.

How you and the people of your team deal with these feelings will make a difference. Be ready to remind each other of positive ways to act through feelings of culture shock.

