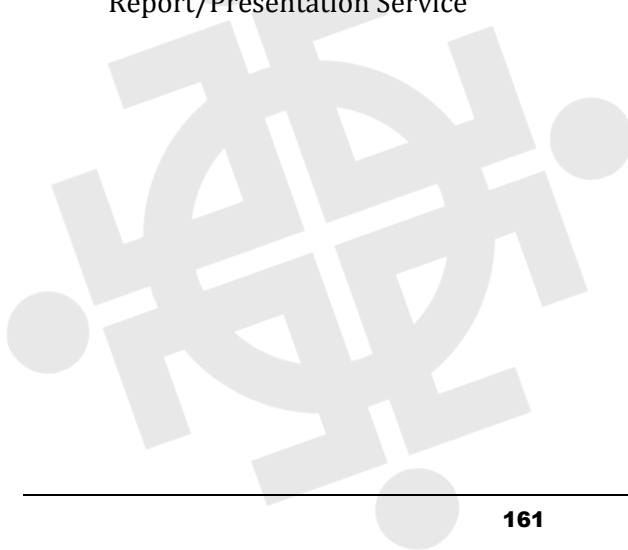
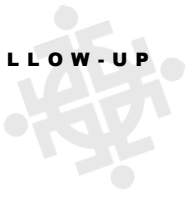


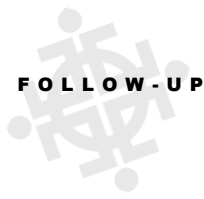
FOLLOW-UP

MISSION—THEN AND NOW

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Mission—Then and Now

The mission trip may be over, but the mission is not!

It isn't over! A lot of times we are relieved as leaders after a mission trip. "Whew, that's done!" Well, the work has just begun! Mission trips should be an integral part of the lifelong discipleship process. The hope is that a mission experience will impact daily life, where the work for the Kingdom gets done! Follow-up is essential. Participants need to take time to reflect and pray; to ask God what He requires of us from what He has shown us. Below are resources to help in that process.

ICON KEY

 Exercises

 Journaling

 Forms

 Bible Study

It is our desire that your mission trip not just be a good experience or a nice memory, but rather that it would make a radical, lifelong change in each member of your mission team. This section is designed to help leaders and individuals continue to process how God is working in their lives and to keep the flame of service and mission alive after they return home from the mission trip. This section includes resources to help you incorporate ministry abroad with ministry at home.

Follow up before you even leave

Short-term mission trips have become a common practice in churches of North America. They offer a great way to connect with mission work around the world, engage another culture, get out of one's "comfort zone" and serve others in a tangible way.

Another commonly expressed goal is that the mission trip experience would have a long-term impact on the devotional lives of the participants and that mission trip participants would return home fired-up and ready to serve others in their own community.

These are worthy goals and yet many trip leaders explain the challenges that the effects of a mission trip fade as participants return home and re-engage in the everyday activities of life.

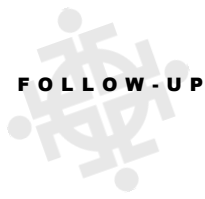
Lasting effects of healthy mission experiences are best facilitated long before a mission trip and can continue long past.

Here are a few steps to take BEFORE the trip that will help individuals and to integrate the mission trip experience into their spiritual life.

- Careful discernment
- Pre-Trip training
- Continuous reflection and
- Planned follow up activities and mission commitment

Below are some questions to consider as you plan your mission trip. The hope is that these questions, and following action steps, will help make the short-term mission experience part of an on-going missional ministry at home.

1. How is God at work in the community surrounding our church?
2. Are there any people groups or areas of town where we could begin to create lasting relationships?
3. In what ways is our church already involved in mission work? Abroad? In our community?
4. Can this team participate in mission work before they go? If so, how?
5. Are participants required to go through training? Pre-trip journal exercises?

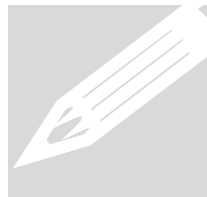


FOLLOW-UP

6. Is there someone in the church (not going on the trip) who can lead the on-going mission work? Or a team of people?
7. What follow-up activities can be planned before the trip?
8. How can the mission trip be a catalyst for local mission involvement?

Looking back—a habit that starts from the beginning.

Debriefing, reflection and journaling are helpful tools to incorporating the actions of ministry into the spiritual life of participants. This practice should be encouraged from the very beginning, when the team is being formed, and long past when the team returns home and to normal life. Below are some reflection questions, journal prompts and discussion ideas to facilitate healthy and thorough reflection. Reflection for before and during your trip can be found in the **“Spiritual Growth”** and **“Cultural Sensitivity”** sections.



My Impressions of...⁶⁵

(Reflections for the end of your trip)

Begin by remembering the different things you saw on your mission experience...both the expected and the unexpected. You may want to review your journal if you kept one. One thing is for sure – Your eyes were opened while you were away. Does that sound like a ridiculous statement? How could one’s eyes not be open? Yet very often in our everyday lives we go through our routines and never “see” things. We are too busy or too preoccupied to notice them. But it was different on your mission experience – you prepared yourself to “see”. You were determined to observe the various things you would encounter each day. Take some time now to reflect upon what you saw.

THE PEOPLE

What did you see in the people that you did not expect to see?

Which of their needs are most vivid in your memory?

What aspects of their lives impressed you most?

THE COUNTRY

What things did you see in the country that was different from your expectations?

Is there any picture that quickly comes to mind? (Why it has stayed with you?)

Seeing is a discipline we need to develop. It is the first step in making a difference in our world. Unless one sees the needs, one can never meet the needs. Because you

⁶⁵ Excerpts from *Back Home Reflection Journal*, www.mountain-top.org

were willing to keep your eyes open on the mission experience, you probably “saw” quite a bit. Not merely sights and sounds all jumbled together, but needs, issues, and concerns festering beneath the surface. We hope that what you saw will stick with you and, more importantly, you will continue to keep your eyes open.

Jesus admonished the disciples to “open their eyes and see” – an admonition well suited for His disciples today as well. So many Christians live without ever really seeing. Perhaps you were one of them before this mission experience. Now the question is not only whether you will remember what you saw in the country you were in, but whether you will continue to “see”.

What keeps you from “seeing” in your world?

What goals did I have for myself before or during the mission trip?

How were those goals accomplished?

What goals have I set for myself now that the mission trip is over?

How can I make sure that these goals are accomplished?

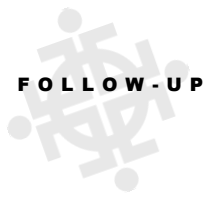
After the mission trip, have there been any changes in my attitudes about any or all of the following areas (check all that apply):

- prayer
- faith/God
- community ministry
- family
- racism
- poverty
- finances
- priorities
- other (explain)

What changes can I make in my lifestyle to reflect these changes in my attitudes?

Do you have someone who can hold you accountable to make sure that you are making these changes?

If you do not currently have someone to hold you accountable, make a list of possible people here:



WHAT I LEARNED

As your experience in and knowledge of the host country has grown, perhaps some ignorance in your perspective about the world and its inhabitants has been dispelled. We hope you took time to listen and learn from those you encountered. Take time to reflect upon what you have learned.

List two things you learned about each of the following:

- The people
- The country
- The church in the country
- The people on your team
- Yourself
- Which of the previous surprised you? Why?

Needs do not simply appear out of nowhere. Factors contribute to their existence. If we understand these, we are better able to identify with people and work with them in meeting their needs.

What factors have contributed to the needs of the people you were with? (Think through the sociological, political, spiritual, emotional, and physical factors you may have learned)

Understanding our world requires effort. Far too often, people put forth no effort to become educated about the situations around them. Seeing needs is a necessary beginning, but without understanding what we see we can be of little help. The question for you is, now that you have seen and understood the people's needs, will your life be the same as it had been before the trip?

What keeps people from learning about and understanding the needs in their world? What practical steps can you take to continue this learning process?

WHAT I FELT

The writer of the gospels tells us that whenever Jesus Christ encountered people in need, He was deeply moved by what he saw. He felt the pain of their need and situation. During your time in the country there were probably situations that caused you to feel deeply. As you saw a particular person or an incident, you may have been deeply moved.

In those times you were most likely being challenged by God in some way. Think of at least one situation on your mission experience when you really felt deeply about something. Write a description of the situation.

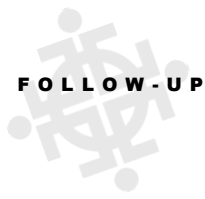
What was it you felt? (Try to describe the feelings you had at that moment.)

Were you surprised by your feelings? Why?

As you reflect back on that situation, what growth do you think God had in mind for you in those feelings?

Feelings come and go, there's no doubt about that. Yet, the feelings you experienced on this mission experience may be etched in your memory forever. Their memory may prompt you to feel deeply again and again in the world in which you live. God meant for you to go on this trip. He will continue to challenge you to grow. Will you pay Him the same sort of attention now, as you return home, as you did on your mission experience? He is not through with you yet!!

What factors may prevent you from being deeply moved in the world in which you live?



WHAT I FEEL NOW THAT I'M AT HOME

Now that I am back, I feel...

My understanding of mission now includes...

Some days I find it difficult to...

My family/friends tell me...

My concept of God...

I wish...

Trip Evaluation

It's important to think about how the trip went, once the group returns. This feedback should be considered in shaping future mission experiences. An **evaluation form can be found in the logistics documents** along with the permission and volunteer forms. You may want to discuss them among the group or you can have team members write out answers to be collected.



Re-entry—Things Seem Different

It is not unusual for individuals to experience a letdown or depression of sorts when coming home from a cross-cultural experience. It is normal. Sometimes individuals have a strong reaction to the culture to which they are returning. It is important not to make any rash decisions (i.e. selling all you own, or chastising others for materialism). People at home cannot completely understand the individual's experience.

Four Common Reactions

1. Condemning Claire --- being judgmental of people who have too much, don't understand, or are uninterested in what the individual just experienced.
2. Withdrawn Wilma --- feeling depressed and alienated, and pulling back from others for the same reasons listed above.
3. Reverting Ralph --- trying to live life just as it was before the trip, denying any changes, challenges, or discomfort.
4. Changed Charlie --- attempting to integrate the new information and lessons into life at home.

Discuss: How have you seen yourself express these characteristics since your return?



Reverse Culture Shock

“Reverse culture shock” may be defined as a heightened awareness of your familiar culture in contrast to the experience of another culture, which may be seen in a new sensitivity to how relationships function, injustices & inequality, consumerism, priorities of what has been normal.

Some questions to consider:

1. Have you found yourself feeling guilty for living in the “land of plenty”?
2. Have you felt guilty for not feeling guilty?
3. Have you discovered any change in your relationship with your possessions (i.e. desiring to sell/give it all away)?
4. How would you describe American friendships? Are they similar or different from those in the location you served?
5. Have you found yourself responding to “regular life” with more or less frustration? patience? anger? joy? love? peace? kindness? sacrifice?

Post-Trip Depression...

“Post-trip depression” can hit anyone in the days following a mission experience. There are a few sources for this.

- Major events are often followed by a natural letdown, given the time and energy required for planning and implementation. It is normal to feel a void after an expenditure of energy and involvement in life-changing events.
- Experiencing a new culture and new people is very tiring. To live life in an environment different from what’s normal can be a drain on us physically, mentally, and emotionally. Once a person returns to their normal environment, the body and mind may feel fatigued or depressed from sheer exhaustion. Sleep and relaxation usually take care of this.
- Missing your teammates. Going through a particular experience together bonds people in a unique way. In addition to being together in worship and work, the group played and laughed together. Not only do you lose the proximity once everyone returns home, but now the people you may spend most of your time with have no real connection to this major event that has altered your life.

Other Questions

Talk about the following:

1. What, if any, difficulties are you having in adjusting back to life here?
2. How are you dealing with those difficulties?

Making it Personal...

There are ways to respond to post-trip depression, healthy choices to walk through the period.

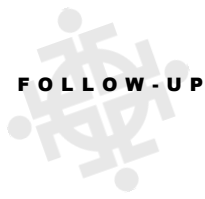
1. Acknowledge how you feel – and recognize that it's normal.
2. Take time to journal and pray through Scripture, telling God what's on your heart and mind.
3. Keep connected to at least one other teammate with whom you can continue to share the experience and your reactions.
4. Do not expect too much of yourself or others. Be reasonable in how quickly and drastically you can change the ways you think and live.
5. Don't make any drastic changes or important decisions.
6. Laugh, relax, and trust God to help you strike a balance.

Change

The person that started out on the mission experience is not the same one returning home. Each person will have changed in some way as they have seen God move in and through them during the mission experience. Team members will be looking at the world around them through different eyes. For example, they may have faced poverty for the first time in their life and now they consider, 'Do I need...' or 'Do I want...?'

Hopefully, the changes will include both a shift in belief and perception as well as in behavior. In order to handle the changes, as a team leader, you need to help the team members to:

1. Recognize and accept that they have changed and how they have changed.
2. Identify which changes are temporary (negotiable) and which changes are permanent (non-negotiable).
3. Identify which changes in the team member will alienate them from their family and friends at home and why.

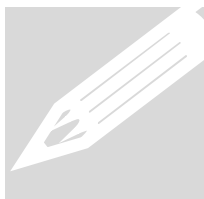


4. Identify which changes will attract people back home to Jesus Christ.
5. See Jesus as their model. He was very much a part of his society and yet part of a distinctly different culture.
6. See themselves not only as changed people but as change agents as well. They need help in introducing change in their spheres of influence.
7. Keep their faith in Jesus who is “the same yesterday, today and forever.”⁶⁶
8. Recognize and expect Satan’s attacks to discourage you. It is normal to experience a low after an intense focused time. Be aware that Satan will attempt to “steal, kill and destroy”.⁶⁷

Identity/Self-Worth

Another related issue related to transitioning home is self-worth. Transitions in life have a way of exposing what stuff people are made of at their core. The mission experience may have redefined the participants’ self-worth and perception of themselves. They may have felt valuable, needed and appreciated while away from home. Upon return, however, they may not receive the same affirmation. Or, the short-term mission experience may have stripped the participants of the things they consider important and the places where they have placed their worth and value. They may be returning with a new confidence.

The re-entry transition is a good opportunity to evaluate where a person’s self-worth lies. You may need to walk the participants through Biblical passages that address this issue (i.e. Psalm 139, 1 Peter 2:9-12, Titus 3:5).



HOW I WILL RESPOND

Now comes the tough but exciting part – the application of what you saw, learned and felt. What are you going to do with your experience? How are you going to respond to the things God is teaching you? It is one thing to go on a mission experience and have a great time. Many do.

But it’s quite another to go on a mission and allow the experience to change you and the world in which you live. The process of responding is an ongoing one that requires you to make decisions day by day. It requires ongoing action. Your mission experience only began a process. The process is not finished yet! In this section, think about the present and the future.

⁶⁶ Hebrews 13:8

⁶⁷ John 10:10

What changes have begun in your life as a result of what you've seen, learned, and felt?

Why those changes?

Think in terms of three areas of possible ongoing responses to the world you live in.

How might you use your time differently based on what you have experienced?

How might you use your money or resources differently based on what you have experienced?

How might you adjust your lifestyle based on what you have experienced?

What ideas do you have for remembering the people you met and experiences you had?



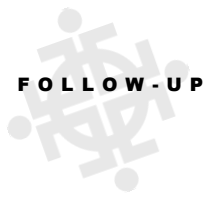
Group Thank-you

Have the team write a thank you note to your hosts – the missionaries, the nationals, the ministry leaders. Be sure to include some lessons learned or ways God touched your life through them.

The road ahead!

It is important to integrate some of the new interests and passions you have discovered. Now that the mission experience is completed, what can you do to stay involved in missions? The following are suggestions:

- Play an active role in your church congregation.
- Make disciples. Who might God be calling you to invest in?



- Pray daily for unreached people. Use a book like *Praying Through The World III: The Unreached Peoples*⁶⁸ or *Operation World*.⁶⁹
- Enroll in the “Perspectives on the World Mission Movement” course or other missions-related course.
- Pray daily for the people you met (missionaries, locals, etc...).
- Find a local outreach organization in which to invest.
- Continue to meet with some of your teammates for prayer and/or outreach.
- Consider a longer term of service.
- Adapt a budget to include additional offering for missions.
- Educate others regarding a world Christian mentality.

Coming Home

Tell the story

Sharing your experience with others is part of the mission experience. It is important to give witness to God’s work in the lives of the team and the new relationships that were built.

Remember other people have not experienced what you have. They have not seen the things you have seen. As much as they want to relate and understand, they can’t.

Here are some tips for relating to those at home:

- First, and most important, pray. Pray that God will give you patience and understanding with people who can’t or won’t relate to your mission experience. Pray that God will use you to open some people’s eyes to Him and/or to missions through sharing your experience.
- Give information in small doses. Do not try to dump everything you learned all at once.
- When describing your mission experience try to use specifics. Tell stories about individuals. Describe situations vividly. Weave details in the story so that the listener can visualize the scene (the squeaky chair, the smell of incense, children splashing in a puddle, your own feelings at that time).

⁶⁸ Johnstone, Patrick, John Hanna and Marti Smith, *The Unreached Peoples: Praying Through the Window III* (Seattle, Wash.: YWAM Publishing, 1996).

⁶⁹ Johnstone, Patrick, *Operation World: When We Pray, God Works* (Waynesboro, Ga.: Gabriel Resources 21st Century Edition; Revised edition, September 1, 2001).

- Avoid comparison statements that reflect negatively on your own culture since such statements might cause a listener to be defensive.
- Make notes about specifics while you are on your mission experience. Combined with pictures you take, notes will help you communicate your experience with sensitivity. (See journaling)

The Month After...

We have found that many times team members who have gone on a mission trip return home frustrated because they find that they have no one who truly understands the things that they have experienced, and no one seems genuinely interested in listening to their stories. During your first meeting, give team members the chance to tell stories and relive memories with each other. During this meeting it is also important to write down team members' goals (individual as well as team goals), and implement a plan for holding them accountable to reach these goals.



Remember What God Has Done

Read Joshua 4:1-9, where the Israelites put up stones to remember how God let them cross the Jordan, and to tell future generations how He had worked among them.

Bible study questions:

- What happens to Israel when they forget the things that God has done for them? (This happens a lot in the Bible – give several examples)
- Why is it important for us to remember the things that God has done in our lives?
- Why do you think it is so easy for us to forget?
- What are some ways that we saw God work during our mission trip?
- What is a way that we as a team can build a “remembrance stone” to remember these things?
- What is a way that I as an individual can build a “remembrance stone”?

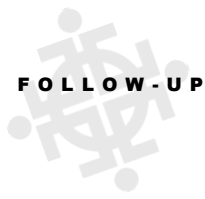
Stay connected

Connect on-line

Stay connected to your host ministry through Facebook, websites, blogs and picture-share sites. You can start a Facebook group or fan page and invite your team as well as your host ministry and home church.

Read the news

It is easy to access on-line news sites that give updates about the region you visited. Keep learning about the socio-economic and political issues that affect the lives of



your new friends. Pray for the churches in this area based on what you've read and learned.

Host Missionary/CWM/Merge Newsletters

If you missed the opportunity during your trip to sign up to receive your Host Missionary or Merge Trip Facilitator's newsletter, or CWM/Covenant Merge Ministries' general newsletter, email you host at any time and they will add you to the list. Read the newsletters to stay updated with what is happening in your ministry site!

Communication with your host

Feel free to email letters for your host to your Trip Facilitator or ministry/mission host. They will translate them (if need be) and make sure that they reach their destination.

Reconnect with your team

In order for your mission trip to have a long-term impact, we believe that follow up meetings with your team are absolutely necessary. We recommend meeting one month, three months, and six months after returning from your mission trip.

Team Reunion

Plan a team reunion within one month of returning home. This can be an informal time of being together, sharing pictures, memories, food, worship, prayer and/or a challenge or encouragement. Your team will want to be together and it is healthy to gather as a group with a shared experience. You may want to schedule other reunions...3 month, 6 month, 1 year, etc. This is a great time to refresh each other about what God did and remind each other of commitments made, to enjoy being together and encourage one another.

Three Months and Six Months After Follow-Up Gatherings

Assess your team's goals and accountability. Encourage your team members to continue on in reaching their goals and making life changes. Remind them of the initial fire that they had when they returned from the mission trip. Below are some more ideas to use to make your meetings fun.

Share

If your church allows it, plan a service or a time in the service where people on your mission team can share what they have learned and experienced.

Picture night

Collect everyone's pictures from the mission trip and show a slideshow at the church or in someone's home.

Dinner

Get everyone together for dinner one night. If someone learned a local recipe during the trip, try it out!

3-Way Calls with Merge Staff, or Ministry/Mission and Pastors

Talk with your area director to see if organizing a 3-way call with your ministry site is possible. For many areas you can arrange a Skype call for your group or your entire congregation.

Keep Serving

Serving others and cross-cultural relationships are not just what you do on a trip. It should be part of your on-going ministry and faith practice. Get your team together and help out a local organization for the day or once a month.

Bible Study

Start a Bible study with members of your mission team. Observe how God is at work in your hometown or area. Consider how your mission team can get involved with God's work at home in the same way that you worked together on the trip.

Debrief One on One

Use the debriefing questions and journal prompts from earlier in this document to help discuss what you learned on the trip, your feelings and thoughts since coming back.

- “How would you like to serve God this year?”
- “How do you feel the Lord is leading you to serve?”

Accountability Partners

Before leaving or upon your return, have all team members form pairs for accountability, to check in with each other and to pray together. There may be times when team members can share best with someone who has been through the same experience. Having prayer/accountability partners provides another way for ministry to continue with each other after the trip.

Report/Presentation Service

“Show and Tell” is where team members carefully select an item from the mission experience as a “memory souvenir” and share why it has meaning to you. It may not have cost you anything but is maybe something you found or something a national gave them. Whatever it is, it must help you to explain a specific feeling, incident or memory of your mission experience.

Keep in mind these guidelines when preparing a presentation:

- Start with a “hook” – a sentence that will capture the listeners’ attention. Use words and concepts to draw people in to your story. Do not begin with, “well, um, the church has only given me five minutes...”
- Be creative! Use stories and descriptive words to communicate concepts and lessons. Speak with energy and enthusiasm.



- Share about people. Others will enjoy more hearing about the ways a life was touched by Jesus Christ than how well the team cleaned up after VBS.
- Accentuate the positive. It is important to share the positive aspects of the culture and people. Sharing the negative will reinforce stereotypes of unfamiliar people or places. Communicating the negative aspects may lead supporters to believe that the trip was not worth taking and their support was wasted.
- Pay attention to presentation skills. Make eye contact, speak loudly, and avoid chewing gum.
- Use good media. Audiences want to see well-put together pictures and videos. Practice using the media beforehand, to take care of any technical challenges ahead of time.
- Be brief. Eliminate unnecessary details. It is important to convey lessons and examples with as few tangents as possible. There are many stories to tell, so be sure the ones you share enhance the point you want to make.
- Practice what you are going to say before you say it. Use notes to help you stay on track.

And try to avoid these:

- Generalizations. Your encounter with one police officer that wanted a bribe is not a portrayal of all residents of the country. Remember that what you say paints a whole culture to others.
- Travelogues or lists of places and people
- Emotional pleas to gain pity or impose guilt
- Inside jokes
- Telling all (In a public presentation, leave out gory details and life-threatening situations, unless it is in the context of glorifying God.)
- Being a martyr (Tell close friends about being eaten by bedbugs, but leave it out of public presentations.)



These materials were compiled and edited by Covenant Merge Ministries
and Mobilization & Connection staff in Covenant World Mission

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