

PLAN – Leading a Mission Trip: Post-Trip Follow-Up

After being a part of a missions experience, as a leader, it is important to follow-up with the team members regularly to ensure that the experience is truly transformational long-term. Everyone on the team will have had a unique experience, and it takes time to process everything, especially if in an extreme cross-cultural setting. By allowing adequate time for follow-up and processing, team members are able to reflect on their experience, and hopefully be able to tell their story in a way that accurately reflects their transformational missions experience. Below are some questions and guidelines to consider as you follow-up with your team members and allow for time for processing and storytelling.

Immediate Debrief:

- At the end of the missions experience, it can be helpful to have a team debrief to discuss the trip: what people liked/didn't like about it, what they learned, what made them uncomfortable, etc. Be sure to leave plenty of time for this.
- It is also helpful to have a debrief session with your ministry partner to discuss how the partnership can be improved in future years.
- Ask questions that lead from “What?” to “So What?” to “Now What?” In other words, ask members to explain what they experienced, why it mattered to them, and how that experience will shape them in the future.
- You can also encourage team members to journal their experiences throughout the trip.

Other questions to consider can include:

- What were your expectations for this experience? What was different from your expectations?
- What did you like or dislike about this experience?
- What did you learn about one another?
- What impacts the way you view this experience?
- Do you perceive _____ differently now?
- What will you take away from this experience?
- What changes will your altered perspective cause you to make?

Follow-Up:

- After being back home, team members will have had time to return to their “normal routine” of everyday life. Most likely, they won't be constantly thinking about their missions experience.
- Give some time to re-connect with the team and ask how they are continuing to reflect on their missions experience.
- Ask probing questions such as: What has been the most difficult/easiest aspect of returning home? What has changed about your life having been on this experience?
- As you reach out to your team in the future, you give team members an opportunity for continued reflection on their experience to ensure that it could be a life transforming experience.

Story-Telling:

- Storytelling is one of the often-neglected aspects of a missions experience. Telling your story not only gives others insight into your experience, but it also allows team members time for continued reflection.
- When thinking of telling your story, there are 3 types of stories to consider:
 - 1) The one-sentence summary when reconnecting with loved ones at the airport.
 - 2) The five-minute summary to share with a friend in passing.
 - 3) The in-depth stories for people who have no time constraints.
- Storytelling is also important for the church congregation to know, and be involved in, the work that is happening with your ministry partner and how the missions team was a part of it.
- Be sure you are telling an honest story. The Psalms say, “Let the redeemed of the Lord tell their story.” –Psalm 107:2

Resources:

- *Stuff You Need to Know About Doing Missions in Your Church Handbook* by David Mays
- *The Open Secret* by Leslie Newbigin
- *When Helping Hurts: Alleviating the Poverty Without Hurting the Poor...and Ourselves* by Fikkert & Corbett
- *Help! We're Going on a Short-Term Trip* (Team Leader's & Team Member's Manual) by CultureLink
- *A Guide to Short-Term Missions* by Greene
- *Equipped for Adventure: A Practical Guide to Short-Term Mission Trips* by Kirby
- *Stop, Check, Go* by Townsend
- *Culture Shock!* Series by Cramer
- *Basic Training for Mission Teams* by Rankin & Tadlock (LifeWay)
- Baylor Missions Team Leader Curriculum – <http://www.baylor.edu/missions/index.php?id=868598>