

"The perfect tool for preparing our best to be on mission."

—Michael Card

Best-selling recording artist, songwriter, and author

HOW TO GET READY FOR SHORT-TERM MISSIONS

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE FOR SPONSORS, PARENTS AND

THOSE WHO GO!

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Chapter 1: The Journey Begins

Missionary Moment

You can hear it, can't you? The countdown. You have prayed about it, you've looked at maps, and you have listened to missionaries... Whatever your feelings, you are doing a good thing. God is moving in this world. His kingdom is growing in parts of the world you have never been, places of which you have never heard. His great arm is touching the nations, speaking to them in ways you may never comprehend. He is desperate to move His created into a deeper relationship with him. You are one of this. You accepted his great arm and embraced Him. Now you are commissioned to go. And you are going. But let's not plunge in without packing a proverbial parachute!

Mission trips need focused preparation even if it is a short term trip. There are some who believe that all we need to do is just go. Those trips can be fruitful but they are rewarding mainly for those who are going. Not necessarily for the people who will be served.

You don't want your mission team's goal to be unsuccessful due to faulty planning!! You know there is no way to know everything before you go, but you want to do your best to be aware of what is ahead of you, as well as be ready for challenges to your world view.

A worldview is one of the most important elements of your trip

A world view is a collection of beliefs about life and the universe as held by a human being. (Or sometimes a group of people). It is the perspective from which an individual observes and understands the world.

And it is a good place to start.

Upside down/Right Side Up

Because the first mapmakers were from Europe and America, They naturally drew themselves on the top. However, when you view the world from space, you see Africa on top.

Perspective can change in a moment. In much the same way, your worldview may change as you make this journey. You'll more than likely take a step back and learn something that will surprise you, maybe even shake your foundation.

Some customs will be easy to understand like the fact that Central Americans don't fancy personal space like North Americans do. Other differences may make your eyes pop. *Men can hold hands as simply friends.* Don't be scared of cultural differences or new ways of thinking, instead look at them as adventure. Seeing things from a whole new angle can be a blessing.

I took one girl to Honduras who had issues with germs. She was reluctant to be touched on the hand. Her friends were afraid the Latin American touchy-feely issue would freak her out. Long story short, it didn't. By the end of the week she was letting little village girls drag her by both hands down the dirt road to the river, giggling all the way. She told me afterward: "it was worth every germ".

The things you learn on this trip will be worth every penny, every prayer, every perspective-changing moment, and every step. And at the end of the day, they will be worth every germ. Perhaps even the ones *you* are spreading.

It's Time:

It may be a bumpy ride, like being squeezed into a fifteen-passenger van and heading up a windy dirt road toward a remote mountain village. On the other hand, it could be smooth sailing like a plan that goes off without a glitch. The important thing to remember is that this is your opportunity to serve God's children in a different way.

You are doing something "bigger than yourself". Going on a short-term mission is a way to learn about the incredible world and humanity God created.

A Final Caution:

Remember that God's "bigness" includes the fact that he's already been to Africa, Europe, and Asia. In fact, he's been to every place in every corner of the world. You are not taking God to them; God has been there all along. He's only been waiting for you to come participate in His Mission!!

So let's take a leap of faith into the great adventure that is short-term mission work.

Eternal Endeavors

Answer these questions as soon as you've made the decision to go. The more you put into answering them, the more they will help you.

- 1- Where are you going on your trip?
- 2- Think ahead. Take the time to find out some information about your target mission:
 - Look at maps
 - Talk to people who have been there.
 - Understand how the currency system works before you go.

Answer some of the following questions and take the rest with you to ask the locals. They will be happy to tell you about their country and it will strengthen your communication skills.

Things to find out before you go:

- 1- How do you plan to get there? Is it a difficult place to reach?
- 2- Where do you plan to stay?
- 3- What means of transportation will you use while there?
- 4- What are some of the major cultural differences compared to what you are used to?
- 5- What other places will you visit around the area of your target mission?
- 6- What are the main occupations, and why are they prevalent in this country?
- 7- Does this society rely mainly on farming, business, tourism, or other? Why? How did it become that way?

- 8- Are there any environmental problems?
- 9- How big is this country? Which U.S state (or Canadian province) does it most closely resemble in size?
- 10- What is the currency of this country? For what or who is it named?
- 11- What is the official language? Are there any less predominant languages?
- 12- Are any specific words or phrases standard for this time of year? Any special songs?
- 13- What are the main religions, and what role does religion play in the everyday lives of the people?
- 14- Are the nationally recognized holidays a reflection of the main religion (or lack of religion)?

Questions/Observations for During the Mission:

- 1- Take note of any unusual billboards or street signs.
- 2- Ask about any buildings, structures, or monuments that look important. Ask a local what they represent.
- 3- Is there anything unusual about the plumbing at your target mission? Is there a reason for its condition? (Be it poor or exceptional)?
- 4- Ask about the political parties. Are there similarities to the political parties you are familiar with?
- 5- Is there anything different about the house and building construction?
- 6- Which side of the roads do they drive on?
- 7- What kinds of things do you see that are similar, yet different from what you are accustomed to?
- 8- Find out as much as you can about their school systems. Do they have year round school? Do they wear uniforms?
- 9- What are some favorite holidays or sports activities?
- 10- What is the meaning of the name of this country?

Chapter 2: Things to Pack

Missionary Moment

You will be stretched many times during your trip. You'll have to deal with the fact that you are not in control. The language is foreign, the cultural norms are different, schedule is often of little significance, and you probably won't be in charge of where the car goes. You'll most likely be told when and where to eat, what to do, where to go, and the weather isn't up to you either.

Everyone is stretched when going to another country

It is a difficult thing to adjust our expectations of a mission trip, but it is important to God's mission. Unrealistic expectations lead to frustration for everyone.

Many missionaries will tell you that the most significant problems arise when their own visions regarding a mission team are unrealistic. In the same way, when the team's expectations of what they are going to do, see, or accomplish are unclear or impractical, chaos ensues.

*Organization, training, and preparation can prevent a lot of problems, and the experience for both your team and the people you are serving will be greatly enhanced if your expectations are modified. The apostle James had something to say about this: **You ask, and can't receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it for your pleasure (James 4:3)***

Group training is critical, yet many missionaries have seen preparation detract from the experience or put unrealistic expectations on the outcome..

If you are to be an effective short-termmer, you must be flexible physically, mentally and spiritually.

Physical Flexibility

Don't be surprised if God decided to flex your own abilities and plans by redefining them. This could mean that you don't get to teach the sewing class you planned or host the sports camps you spent time organizing. It may mean that instead you go to the square and play soccer with the locals, or that you actually make a dress for someone who doesn't have one. *That is physical flexibility.* Now let's talk about some ways to flex those muscles...

1. *Volunteer according to your talents.* Everyone has something to contribute that will make the trip even more meaningful. However, as you volunteer your genius, make sure you are asking, "What is God trying to do?" instead of "What am I going to accomplish?"
2. *Implement a program that can be sustained by the residents, or work to enhance existing programs.* This kind of support to local evangelists or medical personnel helps them carry on their work. You may expect to build a house when you arrive, but find instead that there is a greater need for health classes to be taught in the schools.
3. *Deliver on what you offer.* No one wants to see disappointment in a brother or a sister's face when a promise goes unfulfilled. Do your best and offer your talents, but be realistic and work with the

people in charge so that your message doesn't get lost in your promises. One female short-termer grew so attached to an orphan that she actually promised to return and take him to Disneyland! He is twenty-two years old now – I sure hope he's not still waiting.

4. *Be calm and competent.* Demonstrate that you are responsible, Christlike, calm, competent and willing to try new things. You may find yourself in a small group where a leader is needed and that leader could be you. However, if you prefer to stay in the background serving quietly, that is an equally admirable quality- and you'll be indispensable to those leaders who need your flexible spirit and servant's heart.
5. *Remember the TC rule: Things Change!* God wants you to be teachable. If you reach a point where you know everything, you have stopped growing in Christ.

Mental Flexibility:

Everyone has, at one point or another seen things from a limited perspective. The more we try to look at things from other's perspective, the better we will understand their lifestyle and what is important to them. That is mental flexibility.

Here are some examples:

1. *Remember that being different doesn't mean you're better than them.*
2. *Ask questions.* Inquiry is one of the best ways to find out more about people. Remember however, to ask questions with *service* and *learning* in mind. Instead of "why do they do it this way?" which may be interpreted as "my way is better", try saying, "this is pretty different from what I am used to, could you explain it to me?"
3. *Put on some new glasses.* Culture, like your own pair of glasses, helps you see things clearly but from a fairly limited perspective. When you try on someone else's lenses, things become freakishly blurry! However, an interesting thing happens: The longer you wear the new pair, the harder your eyes work to adjust. In the same way, the harder you try to look at things from other's perspective, the more you will begin to understand them, their lifestyle, and what is important to them.
4. *Eat lunch in someone's home.* This may be a challenge if you are in a country that serves unfamiliar food. But eating at another's table makes a world of difference to those who are serving you their culinary delights. Get over your food hang-ups, refrain from making faces, and graciously accept their hospitality.

Spiritual Flexibility

In addition to mental and physical flexibility, you'll also need spiritual flexibility on your short-term mission trip. Think seriously about the following spiritual principles:

1. *It's not about me.* Remind yourself again and again that the trip is not about you. Recharge your spirit by remembering and reviewing the purpose of God: to redeem and restore a good relationship with His children in every corner of the globe. We are human and therefore prone to exhaustion and frustration. It is Okay to grow tired or feel underutilized. But remember first that the trip is about Jesus.
2. *Have a settled attitude of soul.* When Mary and Martha lost their beloved brother, Lazarus, they were distraught that Jesus was not around to do something about it. But Jesus, who is master over

time and space, raised Lazarus and renewed Martha's faith: "I believe that you are the Christ" (John 11:27).

Like Martha, you can begin your trip with a settled soul and the belief that only Christ can prepare you for what you are about to experience; only Jesus can raise you up.

While on the trip, recharge your "personal batteries" with the same thought *"My true mission is about Jesus."* Anything can happen on your trip. There can be joy, compassion, and real understanding of service. There can also be annoyances, hang-ups, and conflicts. The occasional trip will involve an accident or a tragedy. But even Lazarus died again; he didn't stay alive forever, and neither will we. Whatever happens, the trip is about Jesus.

3. *Imagine yourself in the middle of a marathon, not a sprint.* You never know how your service to someone is going to affect their understanding of God and his kingdom. The children you taught may not remember you five years later, but they'll remember that a special "different" person came to their school and taught them to love God. To accomplish something is a good feeling, but it's good to remember that there is more to be done.

Chapter 2-B: Jesus Flexes His Muscles

Jesus was an incredible example of Flexibility:

Let's take a look at the temptations he faced during his forty day fast.

1. Jesus was challenged physically

And the devil said unto him, if thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread. And Jesus answered him, saying, it is written, that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God. (Luke 4:3-4)

Have you ever been truly hungry? If you would find yourself in a situation where you must go many hours without food – or at least, food that you like! – remember what Jesus went through to understand us, to experience true hunger.

On this trip you may see children who eat only one meal a day and feel called to suffer along with them. Perhaps you will experience your first pangs of true hunger.

2. Jesus was challenged spiritually.

And the devil, taking him up into a high mountain, showed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. 6And the devil said unto him, all this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it. If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. (Luke 4:5-8)

Remember, just because your trip is short-term, cutting corners is no way to save souls. What does this mean? It means that making promises you can't keep or handing out money doesn't necessarily help people. Consider how you would feel if someone showed up in your neighborhood and offered to "solve" all your problems – then left town after a week.

The best thing you can do is pray with them, learn from them, understand them, suffer with them, and enjoy time together.

3. Jesus was challenged mentally.

And he brought him to Jerusalem, and set him on a pinnacle of the temple, and said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence: For it is written, He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee: 11And in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. And Jesus answering said unto him, it is said, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. (Luke 4:9-12).

You may think you can do things better than the locals or even the missionaries in the host country. Are you being tempted by the deceiver to believe you are powerful?

Perhaps you'll stand on a hill overlooking a city with millions of people. In that moment, do you pray for God to act or do you feel you can change things yourself?

*Remember, you can do a lot more for people when
you understand them, not just feed them!!*

Food:

Eating meals in the homes of people in your target location may be the most important thing you do to show them love. And it may be the most important thing you do to *receive* their love.

During his time on earth, Jesus ministered at the table. We do what Jesus did, including eating food we may not like. Can you picture Jesus turning His nose up at food served to Him? Or do you picture Jesus graciously accepting food from humble servants in homes throughout Judea and Samaria?

You may not think you are doing something offensive by making a face, whispering to your friend, making eyes across the table, or laughing loudly, but these are cues that anyone can pick up in any language!

The table is not just where friendships are made.
The table *is* Friendship.

You may need to eat more strange food than you want to. But by doing so, you will show love to your hosts and accept love from them!

Christ's example:

What if you could sit and learn missionary table etiquette from Jesus? Look at the Gospel of Luke and you'll find nearly a dozen examples of Jesus as gracious guest and host of a table meal.

Jesus went to a party thrown by a tax man. Tax collectors were the con men of His day bilking Jews for more money than they really owed the Roman government. The religious leaders complained. They couldn't understand why Jesus would eat with the scum of the earth. Jesus demonstrated that sharing the gospel is more important than keeping the customs and rules of a cultural group. He said, "A good Doctor doesn't spend the bulk of his time with well people, but the sick" (Luke 5: 27-32).

You have heard the story of Jesus feeding the five thousands. Jesus hosts the meal and instructs his disciples to feed others as well. If someone is feeding you, they too are fulfilling a mission Jesus gave his disciples: "give them something to eat".

When Jesus sent out the seventy disciples, he told them to "eat what is set before you". The apostle Paul also exhorts Christians to eat food without questioning when they are fellowshiping with others. (1 Cor 8:4-8).

The table is a place where Jesus was both a gracious guest and gracious host. So the table is a place where the church welcomes strangers (aliens). The table has a missionary quality, especially in light of the fact that the disciples receive their call to missions at a table. The table is a place where Jesus receives sinners and confronts the righteous. The table is the place where Jesus extends grace to seekers, but condemns the self-righteous. Jesus is willing to eat with sinners in order to invite them into the kingdom.... The last (sinners, poor, and humbles) will be first in the kingdom of God, but the first (self-righteous, rich and proud) will be last and excluded from the kingdom of God (Luke 13: 26-30).

Here is the Kicker:

Eating together with God's children in another country is one of the God-given and Jesus-modeled ways to be the body of Christ. Sharing a meal graciously and lovingly is a way to team up with Christ in the way He does business.

Jesus knew what to expect

*To Nicodemus, a ruler who sought Him out, Jesus said, "Unless one is born of water...."
To the Samaritan woman, an outcast whom Jesus sought out, He said, "whoever drinks of this living water will never thirst."*

In each case, Jesus offers something new by comparing in to something they could understand – water.

He knew exactly where each was coming from, and to what extent both would listen. He knew what Nicodemus was fishing for and therefore what bait would hook his intellect. He knew that the woman wasn't necessarily searching, but that she needed to be searched – needed someone to reach into the deep well of her soul and draw forth honesty and conviction.

Jesus didn't assume what to expect; He knew. This attitude is potable "water". This is the kind of water you need to pour into your canteen and pack along on your missionary trip.

Chapter 3: Entering a foreign culture

Some dog owners install an invisible fence to keep their puppies within bounds. When they try to cross the boundary, they get a tiny electric zap, a little reminder that they have traipsed into the forbidden zone. Most dogs adapt well and stay within their boundaries. After all, who wants to get zapped?

So, too, the invisible fences in cross-cultural communication can often zap a first-time missionary enough that he or she may not particularly want to venture out again.

1. *What is culture anyway?*

We sometimes look at events in other cultures and make assumptions or judgments based upon our own experiences. As a result of not understanding the culture our assumptions are often incorrect. The chart below shows that behaviors are on the outside – the skin of the apple, The values, like the fruit’s flesh, lie beneath the skin and contribute to visible behaviors, At the core is what makes us grow and tick and think: our worldview”

A group of missionaries saw an old woman greeting a young boy calling him Grandfather. They thought she is crazy.

When a child is born, her people perform the Kurenit rite (The calling). The women call out ancestral names (“are you Arap Tonui?”) until the child sneezes. This group firmly believes that the child is the spirit and name of ancestor that lives in the person of the new baby. “Hello Grandfather” was not the muttering of a crazy woman, but an actual family greeting.

This is an example of *behavior* that stems from a *value* (respect for ancestors), which is grounded in an animistic *worldview*. (Life is a cycle and those who came before are part of it).

Why is culture important?

“The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us” (John 1:14). The incarnation is the most amazing mystery of our faith. God, the eternal, immortal, invisible” put on the robe of humanity and became like us. So complete was God’s identification with us that one must look a second time to discover his divinity! This truth of the incarnation of Jesus as a human is why identifying with the people should be your primary objective. Obviously this challenge will prove more difficult in some cultures than others, but it is the attitude and spirit of the attempt that goes a long way with the people and opens hearts to the message you’re there to share.

It is important to remember that different cultures perceive reality in completely different ways. *Remember, become a learner first and a teacher second.*

How is culture relevant to my trip?

The average North American, instead of being a learner first, “lumps all groups together and proceeds without references to basic cultural differences”. Many short-termers are guilty of this. It is an easy offence to commit when a person is in a place for a short period of time and doing his or her best to make a difference.

It is unfair to judge another culture by western standards or even modern interpretations of the scriptures. North America is not singularly blessed with divine guidance. All nations stand equal under the sovereignty of God, and we must assume that God is working through other cultural heritages as well.

Paul's aim was to be relevant so that the gospel would be relevant, and he strove to become like those he was trying to reach. Thus, the way he preached in the synagogues in Pisidian Antioch was different from how he preached in the Areopagus in Athens. While his message was always the same _ "Jesus Christ and him crucified"- his methods varied to fit the context.

I am not saying that everything is excusable so long as its basis is derived from another culture. Clearly, this is untrue. What I am saying is that you can share the truth only when you learn before you teach. Otherwise you'll sabotage your own good motives.

Look at the Lord's words through Paul: to bring good news to the poor, the sinners, the weak. At the heart of the Christian faith is Love of our neighbors and sharing our hope with them. Don't consider yourself a missionary just yet; rather see yourself as missionary in training. Study the successful ones on the field, observe how they react to the culture and identify with the people. Most important, look at their relationships with God.

Eternal Endeavors:

Let's have some fun with a quiz. Read each of the following scenarios and choose the answer that best fits what you would do in a similar situation.

1. Grandma speaks to Ghosts:

You saw the Old woman calling the young boy "grandfather". There is a big difference between how a culturally aware person and an unprepared person might react. How would you most likely respond?

- a. "Did you hear that? I'll bet she's slow or maybe crazy?"
- b. "How interesting! I wonder why she's calling him "grandfather"?"
- c. No response.

2. Responding to Haitian Hardships

You have just returned from a trip to Haiti, where you witnessed great poverty. But you also saw a simpler way of life than what you are used to. Here are some possible responses:

- a. "I want to move back there and be a missionary"
- b. They are happy with so little. I want to be more like that.
- c. I'll continue to pray for God to show me more about these people and my place in his work in their country

3. Jesus versus Judas

Don Richardson was a missionary to New Guinea in the seventies. He spent years working with a tribe of former cannibals who were not very far removed from their former way of life. Mr. Richardson had a very difficult time teaching the gospel of Jesus to this group because they would lift up Judas as a hero every time he got to that part in the story. What advice would you give him?

- a. "Keep telling the story. The gospel message is the same everywhere. Eventually someone will understand. If not, maybe you should leave. The bible does say to "shake the dust off your feet if they don't accept the message"
- b. "There has to be some reason they like Judas. Find out more about who they are as a people before you continue with the message. There may be something you are missing."
- c. "Hold a seminar on how to study the Bible".

4. Communicating with Cannibals

You are sharing the concept of the Lord's Supper to a group of formerly cannibalistic Maoris on the island of Fiji. However, the verse "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood" does not communicate the message for which you are hoping. What should you do?

- a. Laugh a little. You've got to admit it is pretty funny.
- b. Retell the communion story in your own words.
- c. Serve something different, like coca-cola and tortilla chips.

Discussion Guide

So how do you think you did?

1. Grandma speaks to Ghosts:

Clearly response "a" would be a choice made in ignorance. Not necessarily stupidity, just not-getting-it ignorance. Some may opt for "c". This is not a rude reaction, but if one's eyes are purposefully open and seeking to be a learner, a response would almost be expected. **"B" is the best answer and will get you a long way in your relationship and communication with the people you are trying to reach.**

2. Responding to Haitian Hardships

It is a noble idea, but "a" is impulsive. No one should make a decision based on such a brief encounter __ yet many people have! "B" is again, a little ignorant. Sorry folks but it is not true... The sad truth is that many in impoverished countries typically have an underlying fatalistic attitude. It should come as no surprise that many of those people have come illegally to countries

they consider affluent. **“C” is the best answer because it shows you are listening to God and seeking your place in working to bring souls to Him.**

3. **Jesus versus Judas**

This is a true story. Treachery was a way of life to the Sawi of New Guinea. When they were cannibals, it was a great honor to have “fattened someone with friendship for the slaughter”. They would befriend them, invite them into their homes, and then, have them for dinner (Literally). You can’t call Judas the bad guy in a culture of self-describes deceivers. The gospel is not the same everywhere. In the real story, the only way this tribe finally understood Jesus was for Mr. Richardson to watch and listen long enough to finally observe some things. The rivaling tribes would often trade their leaders’ firstborn to live among the families of the other tribe and be raised by the other chief’s family and the community. As long as that “peace child was alive, there was peace between the tribes. When he introduced Jesus as the Peace Child for a world at war against the spiritual forces of darkness, they understood. **The best answer is “b”**

4. **Communicating with Cannibals**

As irreligious as it may seem, the best answer is “b”. We would do well to follow the advice from the previous example and find a way to communicate the same message in a different manner. Can you think of some way to do that?

Chapter 4: What You Have to Offer

*God wants to show his greatness by using nothingness. It is his work. I am like a little pencil in His hands that is all. He does the thinking. He does the writing. The pencil has nothing to do with it. The pencil has only to be allowed to be used. In Human terms, the success of our work should not have happened.
(From a Time magazine Interview with Mother Theresa)*

So, what can a short-termer really do? Can I really make a difference in the short time I am here? Herein lies some irony: While our attempts are feeble, God still does amazing things.

When Mother Teresa appeared on The Tonight Show in 1982, She interrupted Johnny Carson's praise of her work by saying, "Do you think Mr. Carson, for one moment, that that little donkey thought the crowd was giving him the praise and glory instead of Jesus?"

Evaluating Your Mission's Focus

Beyond Borders, The mission Organization recently came to a period of reckoning. They had done many building projects, and though they were not all disabling to local people, some of the projects may have indeed done more harm than good.

They prayerfully restructured their program and now call their short-term trips "Transformational Travel". The focus is not on building structures but on constructing relationships with the local people. The short-term trip is meant to transform the travelers and expose them to experiences that will change their lives. The overarching goal is to challenge college students to a mission bigger than themselves, to stretch them with a view towards the possibility of one day making a long-term commitment.

Back to the Prime Directive

It amazes me how readily we get down on our knees for a non-believer who is very ill but take precious little time to pray for his soul during the healthy times in his life. That is both sad and convicting, since it has certainly applied to me. Jesus healed the sick, but it was not His primary purpose in coming. His primary purpose was to save us, redeem us, and restore our relationship with God.

It was not only the spiritual destitution of man that appealed to Christ's passionate nature, but also his physical needs. We all know he fed 5,000 people with two fish and some bread, but we often fail to see what he saw first.

And Jesus, when He came out, saw a great multitude and was moved with compassion for them, because they were like sheep not having a shepherd. So He began to teach them many things. (Mark 6:34)

In other words, He educated them before he nourished them.

So Jesus stood still and called them, and said, "What do you want Me to do for you?" They said to Him, "Lord, that our eyes may be opened." So Jesus had compassion and touched their eyes. And immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed Him. (Matt. 20:32-34)

Here the compassion of Jesus Christ was manifested in His standing still long enough to listen to the cry of two blind beggars, even though He was on urgent business.

Christian Leadership raining is the equipping of ***“God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up” (Eph. 4:12)***

Christ is the prime model of leadership development because He has provided, by His grace, specific gifts to the body, and thus prepares various leaders to nurture the body. Go and do likewise!

You are there for only a short time, so ask yourself, “How will I make the best use of this time according to the talents God has given me?”

Walking with the Wise

What can you do to make sure this mission trip benefit the people you are going to serve?

1- Prepare Yourself

Groups that prepare before coming are better off for doing so. Granted, sometimes there is an imbalance in focus on cultural preparation over spiritual. ***Remember that the first is critical, but the latter can't be forsaken.***

Start by writing out your testimony before your trip. If you have a hard time getting started, think about it this way, if you had only 30 seconds to tell someone why you are a Christian. What would you say? Don't assume that because you know little of the language, these opportunities won't arise. There will often be a translator present.

2- Be a Partner

Realize that your mission's flurry of activity alters the daily flow of life in a church or organization you are serving. Be open to learning from and humbly serving the ministry that is already in place rather than the form it might take while you are there.

It is refreshing to observe other short-termers with open hearts and willing hands. Just make sure there is a clear objective from both sides as to approach. If short-termers focus on partnering with the people of the country, both sides will understand the objectives and match them.

3- Build Relationships

Take time for them. Don't forget that promoting any kind of change takes time and relationship. Pray with at least one person. That moment itself could end up being worth the whole trip. Worship with the people you are there to serve. Worship is so special. It is a benefit in every culture and language. Notice and enjoy the differences but do not attempt to change their style of worship. They are glorifying God. Join them in it.

4- Accept and Adapt

Combine the resources in the country with your own. Motivate people to help others from their own country. Keep moving and adapting by setting up a communication system with your mission team. (Homeland and target country) concerning the maintenance of God's goals.

5- Be a Good Example

Your example affects people more than what you are actually saying. Make sure you are not just preaching God's love but showing God's love.

Avoid saying “I have a right to give this advice because I am paying good money to be here! “. That’s arrogant. A missionary will respond more out of compassion when he is in tune with what the Lord is doing in his life.

6- Consider Long-Term Effects

Unless here is some kind of idea of what this mission is all about, all that the trip will be is a feel-good experience, which is not the goal of good mission work. Think instead of the long range effect of your service. It can really be transforming.

7- Go to Them First

Pray for a long-term vision in your church. It helps when a supporting church also has that vision, because then the missionary doesn’t feel alone doing God’s work in their country.

Bring a good report back with clear stories and goals, both met and unmet. It helps because you bring back the sense of “I’ve been there, and things are exciting” it brings outreach and support to the ministry.

Getting it right

As a missionary once said, if bankrupt bankers held a seminar on “how to grow rich”, what thinking person would take them seriously? It is ironic that often we attempt to bring others to Christ through all sorts of avenues, yet we ourselves hardly know him. We must first get our hearts right. Only then are we ready to begin the equipping process so that we can take the gift of God to the world. Dig the well but also dig deeper into what God is doing in the world and in you, and share that living water along with fresh drinking water. Both are desperately needed in the world.

Building the House:

Is it Ok to take pride in your effort? Of course! The thing to remember is that in order to build successfully, you must commit these truths to heart:

1- The one who taught you to build is the Architect of the universe.

2- The purpose of building is to restore people to relationships with the Master Builder.

God has the power to raise people up for His work when and where He needs them. You need only be willing, or you can bet your fancy tool belt He’ll get someone else to do it and you’ll miss out on all the fun.

“Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders’ labor in vain” (Ps. 127:1)

Chapter 4-B: Take a Spiritual Inventory

Eternal Endeavors:

Taking a spiritual inventory before serving on a mission is very important. Why? Because it is possible to do the right thing with the wrong motive.

Jesus said to first examine your heart if you are thinking of bringing a gift to God. Resentment, bitterness, bad relationships, jealousy and selfishness are all wrecking balls for mission trips. When conducting your spiritual inventory, pray and pay attention. Sins, problem areas, relationship troubles, instructive scriptures, or other godly thoughts that come to you should be noted.

Ask God to reveal areas of your life that need transformation. Call on him to help you make those changes through this trip, His word, the Holy Spirit, and other people.

Relationships

Seek to discover if there is bitterness or unforgiveness in your heart toward any one.

Pray...

Father, You have told us that unless we forgive we can not be forgiven.

I want to set things right with everyone in my life. I admit I feel bitterness /unforgiveness.. I confess this; I don't want to hold on to it.

You have forgiven me of so much worse. I let it go, Father.

I feel the pain, help me let go, help me humbly set it right.

Thank you for guiding me to this time of forgiveness

Pride

Pride must be acknowledged and confessed before repentance can ensue. Do any of these apply to you?

I often think my way is better than anyone else's way.

I am a controller rather than a spirit-controlled person.

I don't think I have any needs.

I rely more on my strength and resources than on God's.

It is hard for me to admit when I am wrong.

I am driven to be recognized and get credit or honor.

Father, show me where pride resides within me.

I cannot manage life on my own, though I have sometimes tried. I confess that pride has lived in me

Rebellion and Iniquity

Sin is not aiming at God's will and missing a few inches to the left or right; rather, it is deciding that you will not even aim at God's target. Sin is rebellion. We need forgiveness and freedom from habitual sin.

Consider the following sins. Do you steal, lie, or fight? Are you argumentative? Do you lust and use pornography? Do you cheat? Are you greedy? Even with what little you own? Does anger rule you? Are you acting out immoral temptations with others?

Father, I confess I am weak and sinful, often rebellious.

I admit I have temptations and don't want to act them out.

*I Admit I am argumentative and want to be a peacemaker.
Remove these things from me. Set me free, forgive me.
I need you, you are my strength and my supply. Help me.*

Motives

Getting our motives right is critical to a successful work in Jesus' name. Mission trips are often opportunities to do good but for the wrong reasons. Once again, ask for Jesus' counsel as you review the list below, and then pray. Note any of these wrong motives you may have for going on this mission trip.

Guilt

Recognition

Escape from your church situation

Building a personal kingdom

Fun/entertainment

Father, one last time I come to speak to you about my heart.
I want it to be purified. I want it to hold only one thing; You.
Father, I confess my motives to you. I will not go on this
mission with impure motives remaining in my heart.
Please create in me a clean heart. Give me the right motive
of seeking and saving the lost in Your Name. May my
every action and word on this trip be only to bring Your
heart to the people, so that they can see and be drawn to You.

Chapter 5: What You Don't Want to Offer

Missionary Moment:

When a group of North American missionaries came to visit an indigenous tribe in Nigeria, they asked, "How can we help you? The answer they received was "We need nothing, we are fine". The missionary group pressed the issue, so finally one of the tribe leaders said, "we don't need that building over there. Could you tear it down for us?" The group worked diligently to eliminate the building thinking maybe the tribe needed the land for crops. Near the end, one of them asked, "What were you using this building for?" The tribe leader shrugged "I don't know. Some Americans came is and though we needed a building so they built a building".

The proverbial proverb

There are times when mission trips can be an annoyance to all involved. In those cases, a proverb like "pride goes before a fall" hits far too close to home. These issues are difficult yet necessary to approach. It is great you feel that God placed this trip and the mission on your heart. So please, read on and try to receive the following examples and challenges with an open mind, a ready heart, and a willingness to say, "Wow that sure isn't going to be me!"

1- "Know thyself.... " (On having a Mighty Mouse Mentality)

Donna was asked to teach a seminar in parenting for a church outside Kenya. She had no formal skills other than having two young children herself. But she was told "whatever you tell them is probably better than what they have". She hesitantly accepted and began to prepare her lesson. Once she realized that most families had more than five children, (some had 10) and that many of these children were teenagers, she returned to the mission group leader, handed over her materials, and said, "Ask them to teach me what to do. I'd rather learn from them".

She later commented, "Taking a seminar on parenting from a qualified expert is one thing. Being a North American shouldn't automatically make me an expert".

Donna was wise. She knew that he couldn't teach others before she walked in their shoes. *Let's not simply build structures, let's build relationships.*

It may be tempting to assume that because we come from the land of plenty, the indigenous people of our target mission are hanging on for dear life until we arrive. This is called a Messiah complex.
Don't get one.

2- "All roads lead to Rome... which makes it hard to go anywhere else". (On North American Superiority Complex)

One Church leader who takes groups to Central American countries still refuses to let the national preachers drive his rented vehicle. The reason, he says, is because, "typically, we Americans are more responsible behind the wheel".... Where did he come up with that idea? Wouldn't he rather have someone behind the wheel who is actually familiar with the rules of the road, not to mention the road itself?

One short-termer, spontaneously called a meeting of the church leaders to tell them he had figured out what they were doing wrong in the three days he was there! Imagine the reception he got. More than likely they were thinking *and you are who?*

Get over yourself. Listen to people, learn about them, and humbly walk with them instead of objectifying them. If you walk into the mission field with the latter attitude, you are choosing to live outside of the spirit and the character of Jesus. Christ was a great listener, learner and companion. And, um- He was God!
If anyone had a right to a superiority complex, it is the Supreme Being.

3- *“A bird in the hand ... might get scared and leave you a wee gift”. (On over-pragmatic Expectations)*

Sometimes great ideas don't turn out to quite the way we plan them. It is difficult to escape our expediency: ten latrines dug, ten dramas performed, a VBS in every village, a gospel meeting, and one hundred people won to Christ. But this is also why our short-term scheme has the capability for collapse, especially when we don't even speak the language.

Listed goals are good, but only when they fulfill what is really needed, not what we think is needed. Back to the platinum rule: *Do unto others as they would have you do unto them.*

Maybe you think: “They need a playground so let's build them one”. Perhaps with the some money you could have built a house with a washroom. Plus, there may be more pressing needs at hand: a woman who needs prayer, a family who would be encouraged simply by your presence at their dinner table, an old man you hold an umbrella for as he walks to the grocery store.

You can't give people everything they request, but you can find a way to do something for them personally. If you inquire of the missionaries or indigenous leaders, you can usually find better ways to pursue long-term solutions that are about them rather than piecemeal projects that are more about you.

4- *“Give him an inch ... and he'll say, “Um, that's all right, I've done my part” (on limited mission mindedness)*

In the movie *Bruce Almighty*, God gives Bruce a chance to have his powers for a few days. Of course, Bruce abuses this by doing everything totally for Bruce. When disasters struck, God confronts him about whether he actually helped anybody. Bruce's meek response is “No”- but he immediately decides to pray for them. He then prattles on about world peace and feeding the hungry. God smiles and says, ‘Great answer – for a Miss America contest. Now pray about something you really care about’. Bruce finally recognizes the tiny miracles around him, people that give of themselves without regard to how it affects them. In the end he decides that most effective way to change lives is to “be the miracle” himself.

Don't be so excited about your upcoming mission to Haiti that you forget it is your turn to wash the dishes after dinner or help your younger sibling with his homework. Who knows what kind of difference you'll make to a friend watching you interact with your family.

If you ask God to show you, you'll recognize not just the miracles he does on your seven-day journey to pass out bibles in China, but the miracle next door- a kid who has said “no” to drugs and “yes” to education. Maybe you'll join in by offering to tutor him on Saturdays. Maybe you'll be a miracle, too.

5- *Give a man a fish; you feed him for a day... Give his daughter a bunch of candy and she'll throw up all over you". (on Fostering dependency)*

"I read the handbook, Mrs. Fann, but I didn't believe it" Joseph cried as he came into the missionary's house with vomit all over his shirt. "He kept looking at me and I couldn't stand it. I just kept giving him candy".

Our handbook for this particular mission point encouraged participants not to make a habit of giving away candy. It is because we knew all too well that the children's stomachs are not accustomed to the sweets. Joseph's nasty shirt and a sleepless night for that particular mama were the results.

Let's be honest, it is easier to "evangelize" a receptive people when one is passing out food and clothing. But there are countless stories of nationals in various countries who become so dependent on the "fast food" missionary that their won inventiveness has been damaged.

You most seriously consider that humanitarian work is not necessarily mission work. A hungry child with hollow eyes is evidence of Satan's hold on the world. Why? Because sin set into motion many selfish, corrupt systems that contributes to that hunger. The fact that this child's belly is full does not necessarily loosen Satan's grip. And although "seeds are being sown," you must consider whether you are truly planting something substantial or just tossing seeds on the ground and waiting for them to produce.

6- *"Curiosity killed the cat ... That ate the rat that lived in the missionary's house we trashed." (On exhausting our Long-Termers and damaging Christ's witness)*

"The last thing we want down here is Tourists for Jesus". We don't have time to baby-sit", says a missionary in Catacamas. She continues, "One time someone actually wanted to make sure I took him to a house that had dirt floor so he could take pictures".

Sometimes, due to insufficient preparation, short-termers can injure their Christian witness. Many missionaries complain about the effect when a group doesn't not follow their advice on appropriate dress. For example, when a local sees a girl in shorts (bare legs are more offensive than bare breasts in some countries), it is once again the missionary or local preacher who has to explain that she is not being intentionally provocative. (Or is she?)

Then there is damaged witness that has little to no possibility of being righted. Two missionaries in Germany got plastered one night because they wanted to taste the famous beer. They lost credibility for a new program they had come to support.

The bottom line is, the missionaries and locals know more than you about the culture and the people they work with. It will not hurt to wear pants for one week.

7- *Rosemary for remembrance ... stinkweed for forgetting". (on forgetting Why We Came... not to mention forgetting their names)*

It is so natural to get caught up in day-to-day life after you return home that you forget about that whole other world you stepped into for a time. An important way to remember is by returning. It is

understandable that you wish to have experiences in a variety of countries, but part of real missionary training is to encourage you to establish lasting relationships in a particular mission point.

A young man who went on mission trips to Czech Republic from eight to twelfth grade made a personal commitment to keep in touch with each of nine friends here. He writes regularly to them about himself the weather, their school, their families ... and their faith. Three of those nine have come to Christ. The permanent mission team in Brno baptized these new believers and continually encourages the growth of the other six. But this young missionary planted an important seed by deeming it important to build personal relationships.

You'll never forget this experience in the field, and I doubt that you'll ever forget the names of the people who touched you the most. But they might feel forgotten.

8- *A fool and his money are soon parted ... often with a going away party*". (on swiping support)

Let's just address this now: There is no substitution for a Long-term missionary. Short term missions, however helpful they are, do not balance a real decline in long-term commitments.

In this day and age, when it is quite easy to travel, it is understandable that you want to experience other cultures and hope to do some good along the way. These are definitely characteristics of short-term work, but they should not be the only objective.

Here is one option: The church supports a long-term missionary, and then sends short-term teams there in support of the mission. This fosters both cultural and empathetic learning experiences for the church members.

Keep Your Perspective

"He must become greater; I must become less."(John 3:30)

I have seen this verse printed on several brightly colored mission T-shirts that teams wear off the airplane. Its prime directive is clear: I will only assist, not interfere, in the order of God's work of saving souls.

Here are the keys to remember:

- 1- Avoid bad attitudes, useless projects, and pity parties.
- 2- Work out of love and relationship.
- 3- Make friends and keep them.
- 4- Work with your team and the mission leaders.
- 5- Steer clear of assumptions – ask if they need a building before you build it.
- 6- 6- Pray a lot, and take time to read your Bible while you are there, just to refresh your mind and open your heart.

Remember, Jesus was the ultimate missionary. He listened, He loved, He taught, and he healed. He can do all of those things through you, too, if you let Him.




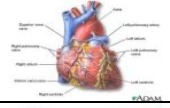













And he sent them out to preach the Kingdom of God
and to heal the sick (Luke 9:2)

Chapter 5-B My Packing List

Eternal Endeavors

It is east to get so excited about a trip that you begin packing everything you think you might possibly need. Many things are ecessary, but not all things are prudent-and I'm not just talking about jackets and batteries here... You also need to pack in a spiritual way.

My Packing List

	A towel (humility): For remembering to graciously accept hospitality.		My brain (sensibility): So I won't try to "straighten out" a national but instead listen and give scriptural advice. To help me remember if I need assistance, I should ask one of the missionaries for help.
	A broken watch (deliberateness): So I won't be in a hurry all the time' particularly when talking to people.		My Heart (friendliness): So I can shake hands with the people I meet (or whatever is the appropriate greeting for my area).
	My bible (Transformation): To discipline myself to read daily from God's word, memorize passages, and grow like Jesus –in wisdom, stature, favor with God, and favor with humans.		A rain coat (Patience): A reminder not to display anger or impatience when unexpected things happen, especially if it could repel people and damage the cause of Christ.
	Crayons (creativity): So I won't sit around waiting to be entertained.		Trowel (participation): So I'll get involved in activities with people in my area, be it gardening, cooking, or sports.
	Gifts (generosity): To give the families I came to serve. (Note: First ask mission leaders for appropriate gift suggestions)		A water bottle (partnership): So I'll work well with the missionaries, sharing frustrations and triumphs during our time together.
	An open mouth (consideration): for carrying on conversations with nationals, not just people in my group.		Magnifying glass (healthy curiosity): for asking questions about things I'm uncomfortable with or don't fully understand, especially how or why a missionary is doing something. So I'll take an inertest in my surroundings and enjoy the differences I observe.
	A Closed mouth (follow-through): So I won't make promises unless I am able to deliver (e.g., sending pictures, Bibles, money, or other promises I might later find difficult to keep)		Work gloves (usefulness): So "I can become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings" (1 Corinthians 9:22-23)
	Journal (discernment): To keep a record of the incredible things I see and hear		Shoes (pro-activity): For helping me think of things to do and to help.
	A mirror (Respect): As a reminder to heed my appearance and conduct. (e.g., what I wear, whom I talk to, and who I can touch or hug).		

Chapter 6: Building Relationships

Missionary Moment:

Bill first saw the ad in the church bulletin. – a team of workers needed willing participants to build a water structure in a remote area of Nigeria. Now, that he was retired, Bill wanted to honor the Lord through mission work. He was thrilled about the trip.

But then he found out Jackie was going. Jackie was, to put it mildly, high maintenance. She was a non stop talker whose favorite topic was herself and her many woes. Bill avoided her at church, and would turn his head if he caught a glimpse of her in the supermarket.

“I really don’t know if I can do this” he told his wife. “You probably can’t”, she replied, “Not if you leave it up to yourself”. Bill took this as a gentle reminder that he had been called not only to take up his cross but, if need be, to lay down his life as well.

Laying down your life doesn’t always mean the risk involved in mission work. Sometimes it means remembering the most important mission: the souls we go to touch. Sometimes it means searching for ways to walk alongside a difficult person with honor and respect. And, yes, sometimes it even means finding a way to work with a person you’ve been avoiding.

Five things to think about:

- 1- Evaluate why you’re going on this trip.** Are you going in order to serve people, or is this just a way to escape your everyday life for a week or two?
- 2- Don’t separate yourself.** Take some time to learn the locals’ names no matter how difficult they are.
- 3- Stop trying to solve everyone’s problems.** You are there to help and teach but also to learn. You can’t straighten out issues that have been plaguing your target mission for hundreds of years without discussing, studying, researching the cultural practices and listening to local missionaries.
- 4- Ask to go home with Christians from the area.** Be safe and communicate with your group leader first. They will be honored that you asked them to show you around. The simple act of walking through their gardens asking questions about their village and their lives is a way of showing honor and love to them.
- 5- Try to learn the language.** I know, I know. You’ve got a limited time. I am telling you it will go a long way with the people if you make even a *ridiculous* effort! Don’t expect miracles, but have some fun. Listen to language CDs before you go and memorize some interesting phrases. When you make the effort, it is fun to watch the cultural barriers collapse.

Eternal Endeavors

Four types of relationships are important before, during, and after mission trips:

- Your relationship with God.
- Your relationship with host missionaries
- Your relationship with your group
- Your relationship with the nationals

It's not enough to recognize the importance of these relationships; you need to live them out in a way that pleases God and reflects His image. Here are three suggestions for each of the relationships.

Relationship with God

Make time to pray. Set your alarm thirty minutes early. This allows you time to pray as well as prepare for the day's activities.

Choose one of the gospels to read during your trip. Focusing on Christ's mission will help you zero in on how yours must reflect his.

Keep a prayer journal. Write down names of people you want to remember in your prayer and situations in which you need wisdom. This written account will show you how God is working in you, your group, and the host families.

Relationship with host missionaries

Don't just do what you think someone else wants you to; ask them, "What are two or three ways I can serve you while I stay?" Asking questions rather than assuming is a way to show love.

Observe then find things to do without having to be asked. Examples include washing dishes, offering to carry groceries from the market, and helping with repairs or odd jobs around the house or mission.

Follow the house rules. If missionaries don't give you guidelines, ask them, "Would it be Ok to use the computer? And should I keep a certain time limit?" In many countries, online time is charged by the minute. So please ask about this before you connect and run up a \$100 on-line bill.

Relationship with your group

Get your head in the game. Listen to what others are talking about on the plane trip and join the conversation.

Determine to be a servant. There are hundreds of ways. Rush to help.

Participate with difficult group members. Deliberately seek out ways to serve the difficult people on your team. Your heart will soften towards them, and their attitudes may change as well.

Relationship with nationals

Observe cultural customs. Always greet people according to customs. You may not at first understand their customs, but you can find out later.

Sit down and talk to host nationals. Think of others as you build your understanding of what to ask. The best times you have will be these rich conversations where you learn, for example, what it's like to be a woman with seven children in an Andes Mountain region living on four dollars a day.

Participate in their lives. If you're in a rural farming area, ask to walk through the gardens; even help swing a hoe. Help prepare food, go to market, or serve the needs of the mission.

Think about and begin putting these five suggestions into practice.

You will find yourself standing on higher grounds, which will help you see beyond boundaries like language, culture, or how to build relationships.

I pray that you meet Him on your trip.

I pray that when you look at someone whose life and work are very different from yours, you don't see just a number or a project or a mission.

Take the opportunity to look into someone's eyes and come face-to-face with Jesus Christ.

I promise!

Chapter 7: What to Expect when you return home

Missionary Moment:

You can't believe it's over after month of preparation and prayer, the trip is now a memory – a brief flash before your eyes.

Evaluating Your Trip

Many Short-Termers experience some serious PHD “Post Hiatus Depression”, (a term inspired by a former student) upon their return to every day life. This response is natural. Each person undergoes something unique on a short-mission trip, and reentry is often the most difficult part. Sometimes, upon returning home, new missionaries become harsh critics of their native land. This sentiment of disapproval is typically generated by one of two things:

- 1- Hypercriticism.** Guilt over all that you have in comparison to the people in the land you visited.
- 2- Fault-finding.** This happens when you experience a way of doing things that you happen to like better than the way your homeland does them.

These reactions are common and Ok, but it is important to put them in context rather than allow them to negatively affect your relationships or your worldviews.

Revisiting Remorse

People react to guilt in different ways. However, most of these ways are counterproductive to helping the situation. Here is an example:

Upon his arrival home, Jerry wanted so desperately to return to his mission point and “better the world” that he did so immediately, without taking the time to process his decision, evaluate the situation, or find out where and if he was needed (*not to mention get more training*).

The Fussy Factor

Since you spent only a short time in your host culture, it is easy to see the good things that your host country had to offer—and it may be difficult to remain patient with your North American way of life. Keep in mind that when someone is so enamored with a new perspective that they don’t see any serious problems, that person has just gone on a mission trip to dream land. During this time you have been in close proximity with new friends and a temporary and artificial environment.

Here are two important things to keep in mind:

1- Be aware that the trip has reformatted your perspective. You may feel a greater capacity for personal improvement, cross-cultural communication, and the ability to integrate these observations into your everyday life. You may lose perspective for a while, see life in your old home as trivia, and perhaps clash with others who don’t share your outlook. Allow yourself ample time to process your feelings. Eventually you’ll develop an understanding of what happened to you during the past few weeks.

2- Give your country a break. There is no need to apologize for your homeland’s way of life. It is part of what shaped you as a human being. If there is something you don’t like, first seek transformation of yourself; and then, as you see ways to influence your community, participate.

It Changes You

There is a big difference between here and there. And now there is a big difference in you too. Embrace it. Find a way to turn your revised worldview into a positive experience that you can share with others as you see what God is doing all around the world through different cultures and different peoples.

Share What You Learned

No one can understand your experience better than a fellow Short-Termier, or even just another person with a passion for missions. Therefore be ready for anything... Other than your family, people may not be interested in listening to what you did.. That doesn’t make them shallow or insensitive. And it shouldn’t make you holier-than-thou, either. It just means they didn’t share the same experience. Would you really be interested in what they did last week?

Yes you may share your perspective with everyone, but it is not just about telling what happened, it is about becoming something new. You just lived a parable. So how do you share this new you with your family and friends? Wait until people ask you questions and show interest before you start talking. Exercise patience.

You have left good friends behind, and when you think of their plight you may cry and grieve the distance. but you’ll also come to grips with the fact that you are in an eternal relationship with people and would never just say, “Oh, at one time that was a part of my life,...” NO! You are in eternal community and love your

new brothers and sisters. You will always pray for them, you will continue to write them, and hopefully you'll be able to make a return visit.

Be an Ambassador

You still identify with your homeland, but you have now developed another sense of who you are. It has possibly accelerated the process that we all go through as Christians –that is, realizing where our true sense of place, of home, is.

You are not just an ambassador of your country. You are an ambassador of the kingdom of God. You took into another culture the traditions of Christianity, which goes against the grain in many countries. You represented not only the kingdom, but also its king.

The Story of Babel Still Rings True

"If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other." (Gen. 11:6-7)

In many mission situations the comment is made, "we all speak a different language, but share the same God". Or, "one day we will all sing and praise Him in the same language".

Yes, it is a sweet thing to know that God is above culture, and a sweeter thing to know that one day we will all speak the same language. There will be no miscommunication, no cultural barriers, no profound ideas, and no ethnocentrism.

More important, one day there will be no pride. According to genesis, pride got us into this mess. According to Jesus, only humility will get us out.

There are many different languages and cultures in the world, and you as a short-term missionary just attempted to break the barrier put in place by Babel for the sake of the gospel. You sacrificed time, comfort, and your life on "foreign soil" to follow the great commission.

But the great commission is not short-term! That commission was a call to follow the example set by Peter, who offered a beggar not just a handout, but also the chance to be healed and to worship God.

You're home. It is time to walk with peace in your heart and a revised, refreshed, even rocked understanding. "You didn't just become a missionary by crossing the seas, but by seeing the cross". May the high place of the cross give you perspective, confirm your purpose, and help you bring the true gospel of peace to your new friends in a different culture. May you "be the miracle". And may the Lord bless you and keep you.

Eternal Endeavors

Consider cutting out this and placing it on your nightstand or in your Bible, putting it in your car, or taping it to your fridge. You'll be experiencing these things right away, so find a spot to put these reminders where you can review the list often and exercise patience with your self!

Stuff to Consider Before Your Return

- 1- **Be aware** that you may experience some depression, loneliness, fatigue, and illness as reentry symptoms of stress. Remember, you can experience stress from both happy and sad events. You may go through a grieving process.
- 2- **Be Alert** to your own expectations and the expectations of others. Sometimes conflicts in value will occur, but remember that values are the outcome of an individual's understanding of life. If you understand that, then you're headed down the right path.
- 3- **Be reflective.** Allow for rest, reflection, and rejoicing in what you saw God do. Reflect on your experiences and ask the Lord to show you the various aspects of your trip from which you can grow. Evaluate all that you have been through.
- 4- **Be active.** Talk about differences in lifestyle that stood out to you (like seeing

chickens in a tree), but try not to be judgmental or pass criticism, even to fellow short-termers.

- 5- **Be Patient.** Take your time to readjust. Be patient when others don't understand what you have experienced.

Chapter 8: For the Parents

Common Questions Parents Ask Concerning Mission

- 1- *Should my child feel a "calling" for mission work before he or she goes? What if my child feels it and I don't?*

It is hard to explain the word "call". This is something that can cause doubt and undue stress. Sure we need to be called, but are we talking about some burning bush kind of call from God? I don't think so.

God calls us by using people, events, and words, including the Bible, if we are willing to open it, read it, and be transformed by it. The call doesn't have to be mysterious; it can simply be a nudge or urging of the Holy Spirit to do something bigger than us.

- 2- *Why do they have to go to another country to do mission work?*

They don't have to. They can go next door to do mission work. In fact, hopefully, he or she already does that. But there are opportunities that present themselves when we least expect them.

Mission is a word that has come to represent the great commission given to us by our savior: "*Go [therefore] and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them to the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have enjoined you. And behold, *I* am with you all the days, until the completion of the age"* (Mathew 28: 19-20). It is a matter of great urgency that we commit ourselves to carrying out the missionary task. China, a country with a population of 1.2 billion, has an extremely limited gospel witness. Jesus commands us to go!

My father gave me a penny when I was a child in New Zealand, where my parents were missionaries for almost ten years. He said, "Keep this and remember that it tells you what you are"... You trust in God... and you are ***One Cent***" My father's use of words could be annoying, but this time his humor was profound: You are ***one sent***. The root of mission involves sending. But who? *My Child*? Maybe. That is up to God.

- 3- *I am concerned! Do you have any tips regarding nutrition on a short-term trip?*

- *Trust the organization they are going to work with.* Most organizations provide purified drinking water and cook with it too. Trust them. If you are not sure about the organization, ask the mission leader.
- *Ask before you eat!* Yes, your child should trust his host missionaries, but if she feels some food is questionable, she should be encouraged to ask before she eats. (Anyone knows how many mango, coconut, and guavas it takes to spend all day in the washroom).

- *The reality is sometimes people get sick.* There is always possibility that someone will get sick from the food or the water. Expect that possibility, encourage wise decision making (as to what is appropriate for your child's stomach), help your child pack her medicine, and pray for the best.
- 4- *Will my child be able to communicate with me on a regular basis?* In most cases there is a high possibility of consistent communication. Technology has made it possible to send e-mails, group updates, etc. However, there are still places where it will prove troublesome to call home every day. Here are some good rules of thumb:
- *No news is usually very good news.* Believe me, if there is an emergency, they will be able to get in touch with you.
 - *Establish a phone/e-mail tree.* Offer to create a communication tree – a phone/e-mail list to get the word out in case of emergency. It might lighten the mission leader's load to have just one person to call instead of thirty.
 - *Volunteer to help with updates.* There are many free user friendly programs that make posting blog entries easy and convenient. It may greatly relieve the team leader to have you offer to post updates for the team.
- 5- *Is the government safe/stable? Is it a dangerous place?*
- Even though there is always a chance that your child could drown while swimming, it doesn't mean you won't go swimming with him.. Right? You can't be there on their mission trip, but the same concept applies. The mission leaders and the local missionaries will now share your child's responsibility. You have to make the decision to trust them. Let's discuss a few important factors:
- *Mission tragedies are extremely rare.* There are thousands of mission trips taken every year. The awful tragedies you hear about are about one in a million. Bottom line: Things have happened, but statistically not very often.
 - *Consider your local news:* A convenience store in your neighborhood was robbed. Are you moving away from the city? Just because something happened in one side of the target country doesn't mean it isn't safe to be on the other side. So ...
 - *Find out as much about the target mission point as you can, but find out from sources you trust.* Consider avoiding the Center for Disease Control or Government Internet Overviews. These sites are going to tell you the worst-case scenarios because they have to. The stories are true but these sites are designed to list every single thing that could possibly go wrong. Find out about the country but get the information from missionaries or nationals who have lived there.
- *Is it worth the risk? Parents don't want to send their children off to war.* But they do! Why? Because for the most part, they believe that the cause is worthy. It is a spiritual battle we face, a battle against fear that would cause us to back down from opportunities for our children to grow and mature through cross-cultural experiences. We never know how far we can go unless we are allowed to push the edge of our own boundaries, our comfort zones. Yes. Those mission trip decisions are worth the risk.

Some Final Advice

Often our nervousness as sending parents is part of an anxiety that says *I want to control what my child does so I don't have to deal with how it makes me feel.* But, as you know, parenting is not about maintaining control, it is about influencing our children positively as they make choices. You cannot retain a position of influence over your children unless you regain a position of control over yourself.

Look closely at the following "Trust God" acronym, paying attention to the second T in the list. I know parents who said they felt closer to their children when they too were doing service work while their child was away.

TRUST GOD

Trust the Mission Leader

**Review the target mission point.
Find out as much as you can.**

**Understand that sometimes it is
best to bite your tongue**

**Stay away from the internet if
you don't want indigestion!**

**Take part in service opportunity
while your child is away.**

**Go to at least one meeting
(Find out beforehand which
would be best for you to attend)**

**Offer to do something to help
the mission leader prepare.**

Don't stop praying!

Your Children will one day leave the quiver. Wouldn't it bless you to share in that joy by pulling them out yourself and being the archer that sends them? Yes it's frightening to watch them fly, but you have done your job well, and that target needs to watch out! Your child just may make a direct hit and change some lives because you *aimed* well.

In fact, a bigger blessing to your family, as Jesus' disciples, might be to one day organizing a family mission trip. The blessings will abound in relationships and in ministry. Now, May God bless you as you challenge your babies to tackle that diving board and leap into the deep end.