

ROLLING HILLS COMMUNITY CHURCH

MISSION TRIP LEADER'S GUIDE

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INTRODUCTION

You are likely reading this because you have been asked to lead or have considered leading a short-term mission trip with Rolling Hills Community Church (RHCC). The purpose of the guide is to help you in your role as you lead your team in preparing for, carrying out and returning from your cross-cultural mission experience.

What follows are some general “best practices” for mission trips, and some particular policies and requirements of the RHCC Missions Committee. This is not a comprehensive planning tool, but a guide-book for those who are new to the role of being a mission trip leader.

First, we need to begin by understanding the bigger picture of missions. What we do or see or hear during the short-term mission experience is a small glimpse into the larger things that God is doing in a particular place, community, or project. As missionaries, we need to be sure to plan for our short experiences with this bigger vision and long-term purpose in mind. Short-term visitors come and go, but the ministry in that place has been going on long before we arrive and will continue for some time into the future after we leave. We need to be sure that our visit supports and strengthens that on-going work. That’s why prayerful preparation and careful planning is so important.

OUR VALUES

Because we have long-term vision in our short-term programs, we value:

- **Christ-like ministry** – caring for others in humility and love with sensitivity to cultures, so that we might demonstrate the grace of God through service.
- **Relationships** – taking time with people above the work or projects, so that we might be drawn into the work of God in the community we visit.
- **Partnership and Participation** – being present to witness God’s work in a community, so that we might testify to that work in us and to our community at home.
- **Transformation** – being sensitive and responsive to the work of the Spirit of God, so that we might never be the same again.

PART 1: YOUR ROLE AS A TEAM LEADER

Your call to lead this mission experience for others means that you have been appointed to the joy of serving not only on the mission field, but also serving in the lives of those who go with you. Developing an attitude of service to your team is the first step in your role as a missions team leader. You are there to guide your team on their journey and lead them in the transformational experience of seeing God at work in the world and participating in that work. As you take on this new role, we pray you will find joy in that service!

Your servant leader role will have many dimensions. Below are a few of the roles to which you will be called.

Roles

Be a Pastor: Lead your team as a shepherd with an attitude of service, and an awareness that much spiritual growth happens in these brief cross-cultural experiences. Be sure to include devotional time in each orientation meeting and during each day of the trip. This responsibility may be delegated to team members, but it is ultimately your job to see that it does happen.

Be Organized: Having well-prepared orientation meetings and organizing all the information you need to share with your team gives you confidence in leading and gives the group reason to have confidence in you. The RHCC office is here to assist and support you in booking flights, setting the budget, and handling paperwork.

Be an Encourager: Get to know your group and be a voice of encouragement as they take new risks and grow in their own faith. You can help individuals draw out of their experiences the things they are learning and the ways God is speaking to them.

Be an Example: As you demonstrate cross-cultural learning and sensitivity, your example becomes a way for others to follow. In particular, if your host has put in place certain rules or requirements like a dress-code, be sure to comply and encourage compliance for the whole group.

Be Prepared & Flexible: You never know when last-minute changes to itinerary, medical concerns or unavoidable emergency situations like natural or political disasters may arise. Have a flexible attitude in this process, and make sure you have resources and plans in place if a true emergency does arise. You cannot guarantee safety or health, but you can do some things to avoid dangers and be prepared for when bad things do happen.

Responsibilities

Bottom-line, as the team leader, it is your responsibility to make sure your team is prepared for the trip; prepared financially, spiritually, schedule-wise, etc. Yes, there will be challenges along the way, but being prepared and having a team that is ready for what may come their way will make the experience more valuable for all. Remember, the goal is to be prepared for the cross-cultural experience, so that we can positively experience all that God has for us in this new place and new opportunity for ministry. Proper preparation ahead of time minimizes the opportunities for the team to be distracted from the goal of experiencing God.

Manage Trip Finances: After establishing a trip budget, you should set expectations for collecting advance deposits and final payments well before the beginning of the trip. In the trip budget, include funds for service & building projects in addition to just your travel expenses. Foreign airfare is expensive so sufficient advance deposits should be collected before booking nonrefundable flights or other commitments. Final payments should be due and collected at least 2 weeks prior to departure. Avoid the added cost of using a travel agent – with today’s online tools, you can handle these transactions yourself or assign them to an experienced team member. The church credit card should not be used for trip expenses. Advise team participants they will be required to carry cash or personal credit cards to cover personal or incidental expenses that you will not be handling.

Plan & Schedule Orientation: RHCC requires a minimum of six hours of pre-trip orientation, which we recommend be broken into three two-hour sessions. We also require two debriefing meetings after the trip. Schedule them well in advance and plan what will happen during each time.

Pray! Cover the trip in prayer. Remember to take time to pray for your own experience and growth. Pray for each team member and the team as a whole. Pray for the people you plan to visit and the ministry they are doing. Pray for the church at home and how God might enhance the life and witness of the church through the team members. Lead the team in prayer!

Get Them There and Home Again: You are ultimately responsible for guiding your group to and from airports, through airports and customs, etc. This includes your responsibility to set a budget and handle the funds for travel, accommodations, and food and report your expenses upon return.

Debrief and Care for your Team: Transitioning back to daily life after a mission trip can be a challenge. Continue to pray for your team after your return home and consider gathering with your team a few weeks after your return to encourage your teammates in their daily walk with the Lord. You may also want to set up a group text message for the team and check in on a daily or every other day basis, to see how the team is readjusting.

Report to the Missions Committee: Stay in close contact with the Mission’s Committee chairperson or your designated Missions liaison. Keep them apprised of the status and development of the trip (before, during and after the trip). Invite them to your orientation and de-briefing meetings. The mission’s committee members have your success and the success of your trip at heart and will be praying for you and the mission and will be willing to provide assistance to you as needed.

PART 2: PREPARING THE TEAM

One of your primary responsibilities is preparing the team for their cross-cultural experience in mission. We cannot overstate the importance of being prepared! Without adequate preparation, a person might miss out on the blessings God has in store for them during their cross-cultural experience. **The goal is being prepared for the cross-cultural experience, so that we can positively experience all that God has for us in this new place and new opportunity for ministry.**

Your faith will also be stretched by this experience! ***Don't forget to prepare yourself.*** As the leader, you need to take the time to be prepared yourself before you can appropriately prepare the team for the experience. Of course, you will be learning and growing along the way! But, special attention to your own spiritual readiness and an open heart to the transformational process can go a long way!

Take time to **begin praying** and listening for God's voice to guide and teach you in the leadership process from the very early stages of the planning process. Pray throughout the recruiting process, as God calls the group together for the mission trip. Pray through the orientation process, that God would prepare each one for the cross-cultural ministry experience. Pray throughout the trip. Continue to pray after the trip, that God would help each one to see clearly what they learned, how they grew in faith, and where they can continue to be involved in God's world.

The mission team is normally expected to consist of members of the RHCC congregation in order to accomplish our goals of spiritual development both individually and within our church body. If friends or family from outside RHCC wish to join the team, please seek advance approval from the Missions Committee before making any promises about their participation.

The Missions Committee makes the following suggestion for preparing yourself and your team spiritually. Prayer will be one of the most important ways that you can prepare for your short-term experience. Here are some suggestions of the things to pray about:

- Pray that you will be teachable, submissive to authority and eager to serve.
- Pray for the team leaders and the other members of your team.
- Pray that you will demonstrate love toward people you meet.
- Pray for the people in the city/country where you will be serving.

A: INDIVIDUAL PREPARATION GUIDE

As you lead the mission trip, you will likely get questions about passports & visas, immunizations, fundraising, and packing. These are things that each individual is responsible to complete, but for which they may need a little encouragement or assistance.

Each participant is responsible for the following:

1. Filling out an application and turning it in before the deadline.
2. Completing the necessary forms if you are involved in a hosting situation.
3. Obtaining a valid passport with at least 6 months remaining validity past the end of the trip for international trips. This now includes both Canada and Mexico.
4. Getting proper immunizations.
5. Finding appropriate funding & prayer support for their trip.
6. Applying for short-term travel insurance.
7. Packing their bags.

Passports & Visas

Information about International travel can be found at <http://travel.state.gov/>. Passport applications are available online or at most local post offices. It can take a month or more for your application to be

processed, so encourage this to be completed right away! Visa requirements are different in each country, some you must apply for ahead of time. In those cases, it is best to send the applications as a group. Find out what the requirements are for your destination, and ask the RHCC office for assistance if necessary.

Immunizations

Immunizations are essential for safe and healthy travel. You should research what is advisable for your destination and pass along that information. You can find information at the **Center for Disease Control and Prevention** website, www.cdc.gov/travel. It is often advisable to discuss immunizations with your primary doctor, but receiving your immunizations there will likely cost more than at the Contra Costa County or Alameda County Health Departments. Also if you are member of an HMO like Kaiser, they will have recommendations.

Contra Costa County Health Department (CCCHD)

A good local resource is the Contra Costa County Health Department (CCCHD). For schedules, fees, and locations check online at <http://cchealth.org/immunization/travel.php>.

Raising Financial & Prayer Support

Usually, mission trip participants will be self-funded or need to find additional funding sources from their friends and family who want to partner with them. In fact, we encourage participants to send out a letter asking for support from their family, and friends. This invitation to partner in mission can be an important source of prayer support as well as financial support. It also gives the participants a good place to start telling their stories when they come home.

Funding help may be available through RHCC. Applications for the additional funding should be made to the Mission's Committee.

When fundraising, checks can be made to "Rolling Hills Community Church." The trip location should be on the check but not the participant's name (putting the name on the check may affect the tax status with the IRS). We encourage participants to collect the checks personally, so that they can track their support and know how to send appropriate thank you letters. Final payments are due one month prior to departure.

Packing Guidelines

When packing for a mission trip, you obviously want to keep your destination and purpose in mind! But, there are a few other guidelines worth considering.

- There may be a dress code required by your host. If not, ask your host about appropriate attire for your situation.

Pack lightly! You can re-wear most items. Consider packing with a friend and sharing the load on bulky items or things you may or may not have need for: over the counter medicines, first aid items, etc.

- Leave at home: expensive, irreplaceable, and flashy things; and extensive hair care products.
- Electronic equipment: can be an invaluable aid to travel and the mission but can be a major distraction if participants remain too absorbed with business or personal matters. Leaders should discuss with participants expectations and guidelines appropriate to each particular mission situation. When traveling overseas, a compatible cell phone with an economical rate plan might be especially valuable. Also verify what or if a special electrical adaptor is required to for operating or recharging the electronics.
- Don't forget: Bible, Journal, and a re-useable water bottle.

- Pack your carry-on as if it could be your only bag (this does sometimes happen!)
- Leave room in your luggage for supplies and gifts for your host (This is welcomed and encouraged by most missionaries!)
- Check with airlines for size, weight and other luggage requirements. Most airlines now charge for any checked baggage regardless of size or weight, so be prepared for additional cost.
- Credit and/or debit cards: for foreign travel especially, a card with no foreign transaction fees and with a smart chip is best. Remember to notify your card issuer of your schedule and itinerary (a Travel Alert) to prevent your account from being frozen. The phone number is typically on the back for your card.
- Personal Medications: be sure to bring personal items you might need, especially prescription drugs. It is smart to bring a few extra days' worth in case there are travel disruptions.

B: TEAM PREPARATION GUIDE

The first thing to consider is what you hope to accomplish in this mission experience.

What are your goals? Here are some suggested goals to consider:

- **Service:** to help the poor, to give hands on serving experience, to offer a needed skill, to offer a Christian witness through our presence, deeds, and testimonies. Consider what special skills, talents, and gifts the team can bring to the field that are not already available locally. How can this team be a unique blessing to the mission and the missionary?
- **Discipleship:** to see a community in action; to deepen commitment to Christ; to teach servanthood; to see a global vision of God and the Kingdom; to battle “cultural Christianity”
- **Deepen Involvement:** to establish a relationship; to investigate further involvement; hear and learn about God’s work to discern how we can be involved
- **Vision Casting:** to expand your view of God’s Kingdom, ignite a church’s mission vision; learning and inspiration

Four Important Components

There are four essential components to preparing your mission team: spiritual preparation, trip details, cultural learning, and team bonding. As you plan your orientation meetings, make time for each of these components. You don’t have to label each component or keep them separate, but it is important to that each meeting touches on all four areas.

1. Spiritual Preparation

A cross-cultural experience of mission will be faith-stretching because we are forced out of our own worldview and into another. It’s best to begin preparing for and anticipating the faith challenges of cross-cultural mission very early in the process. Prayer, reflections on pertinent Scripture passages, individual journal-keeping, and more prayer are vital in preparing for what God will do in and through us when we get “out there.”

Remember, spiritual preparation should be done individually and as a group. It is also important to plan for a daily time of worship, prayer, Scripture reading, and spiritual reflection during the trip.

2. Trip Details

You can’t go out of town with a group of people without making sure you have all the plans in order. Details of travel should be communicated at orientation meetings and all necessary paperwork completed. These things are best prepared before the meeting and then presented at the meeting. Details and logistics are important, but don’t let them consume your orientation time.

You also want the mission team to be prepared for the specific projects, meetings, responsibilities or activities they will be doing on the trip. If you need to prepare a children’s program, learn how to swing a hammer, or lead a worship service, take time in the meeting to work together on those efforts.

(For information about travel and required paperwork planning, please see the previous section, “Individual Preparation.”)

3. Cultural Learning

When outside of our own culture for a time, we suddenly are faced with unusual and even confusing new cultural norms. Even when we are visiting a culture that is similar to our own, the differences will seem significant. The best way to prepare for the cultural change is to learn as much as possible about the place and people we will be meeting. Take the time in your meetings to learn and share about the place and people – the language, history, social customs, religion, food, music, current events, etc.

It is particularly helpful to learn some basic phrases in the language of the people you will be visiting. Saying, “hello,” or “thank you,” in the language demonstrates your willingness to learn and your respect for their culture.

Having an open conversation with the group about the cross-cultural process, cultural sensitivity, and the cultural stress you may encounter is also important. We should not assume that the group will “go with the flow,” because it’s harder to go with a “flow” that is strange to us. In addition, most Americans do not fully appreciate or understand the cultural baggage we carry with us. Preparing to be humble learners and listeners is a key to a successful mission trip.

4. Team Bonding

No doubt during the time of travel and cultural stress, there will be opportunity for conflict. The goal is not to eliminate the conflict, but to be bonded well enough as a team to be able to handle conflicts with grace and love as they arise. A part of our Christian witness to the community which we serve is the expression we give to the Body of Christ. “They will know we are Christians by our love.” Creating relationships between all team members is crucial to a positive cross-cultural experience and positive witness to Christ. Times of sharing and prayer can be helpful, as well as interactive activities which create space for getting to know one another.

Top 10 Ways to be a Good Guest

1. Show respect for your host by using proper greetings and titles, especially to the eldest in the group.
2. Ask your new acquaintances about their families.
3. Be a good observer and listener, and ask polite questions.
4. Dress appropriately to show honor to the culture.
5. Act very discreetly with the opposite sex.
6. Always show gratitude for your accommodations and food, whatever they may be.
7. Never show your temper.
8. Be sure to get permission to photograph someone.
9. Show empathy and appreciation, not pity, for the surroundings.
10. Be flexible with your time.

From Before You Pack Your Bag Prepare Your Heart, by Cindy Judge

Tips for planning Orientation Meetings

- Do not allow the entire time to be consumed with logistical planning. While this is essential for a successful mission trip, these things tend to take care of themselves. Besides, no one enjoys a meeting which is mostly concerned with the details. Logistics are best worked out *before* the meeting, and then reported *briefly* at the meeting.
- Always make time for prayer. Prayer should not be a tag-line at the end of the meeting, but an important exercise for the whole group. Prayer is a great way to prepare spiritually and bond as a team. You may consider having participants choose a “prayer partner” to commit to pray for one another until the next meeting.
- Be sure that you (the leader) do not do all of the talking. Prepare good open-ended questions ahead of time, and allow time for everyone to respond. Be a facilitator of conversations. Be aware of the person who tends to dominate conversations and others who are quieter during meetings. Do your best to facilitate equity in conversation.
- Try to plan activities or conversations that integrate more than one of the components. For example, asking “What are your expectations for this trip?” at the first meeting opens up spiritual conversations and facilitates team bonding.
- For language learning, do a search online to find language learning resources, or invite a native speaker to come and help your group learn some basic phrases. Free translation apps for smartphones (i.e. Google) can be useful too.

See Appendix B for suggested orientation activities.

PART 3: THE TRIP

Before you leave, plan for the following important considerations.

Spiritual formation time and journaling

Each day should include time spent together devotionally. This could include worship music, Bible reading, and prayer. Make a plan for when this will occur and who will lead these times. Check with your hosts to be sure it will not conflict with scheduled activities and travel.

Invite your team to have journaling time each day. You may not need to create a scheduled time for this, but as the leader you should be encouraging the journal process. A mission trip journal is not just a record of “what we did today,” but a record of what work of God we have witnessed, what struggles we have faced, what prayers we have prayed. Journaling is a spiritual formation tool, and it is also a record of our spiritual growth that we can go back and read years later.

Interpersonal Conflict

Live in close quarters, change time-zones, & experience strange environments. Throw in 10-12 personalities and you’ve got a recipe for interpersonal conflict! Conflicts are likely to arise, so make sure your team feels comfortable in approaching one another to work through these conflicts in healthy ways. Be prepared to lead people through conflicts, speaking a word of peace and reconciliation.

Staying Healthy

Changing sleep and meal patterns is inevitable. To stay physically healthy, follow these tips:

1. **Drink plenty of water.** This cannot be emphasized enough, so drink plenty of water! Good hydration facilitates good energy, good digestion, and good rest. Dehydration produces headaches, digestion problems, and can even lead to hospitalization.
2. **Eat a balanced diet** of grains, proteins, and fruits & veggies when possible. Pack healthy snacks and watch out for those in the group who struggle with eating new foods. Avoid food and drinks that may be contaminated or spoiled.
3. **Sleep well.** On mission trips we want to pack in as much activity as possible. It’s tempting to go-go-go and never stop to catch our breath. But, don’t forget to have a Sabbath and remind the team of their need to rest.
4. **Practice good sanitation.** This may include bringing your own supply of toilet paper and hand sanitizer.
5. Remind people to bring along necessary **prescriptions and over the counter medicines**, as these may be difficult to purchase in country.

Travel

It can be challenging to herd a team through airports, bus, or train stations, especially in a foreign place.

- Stay calm. Be flexible.
- Have a system to keep track of each person.
- When in doubt, stop and ask for directions or assistance.
- Have contact information for your hosts, including a local phone number and address.

When Bad Things Happen

We hope and pray you will have a safe journey, but the unexpected may happen - natural disasters, political upheaval, sudden injury or illness.

- Be emotionally and spiritually ready for these circumstances to arise, so that your team can trust you to guide them.
- Know how to get the appropriate help you need in your destination. Have contact numbers for missionary or national hosts. Know how to reach the U.S. Embassy in your location.
- Plan to have some extra cash on hand for the unexpected.
- If your group will not always be together, plan for a meeting place in the community that is visible and instruct the team to go there if trouble arises.

Handling Funds and Gifts

You will likely be bringing cash to pay for many of the trip expenses. Don't pack it in your suitcase, and don't keep it all in one pocket or carry-on. Keep it close to you at all times. Keep good track of your spending and get receipts when possible.

You also will be taking gifts for local hosts and people. Bring appropriate gifts. Don't assume that the people need something. Ask your missionary host for suggestions. We highly recommend that you give gifts to individuals through the missionaries or school or program that is already established. Do not give small hand-outs of dollar bills, candy, or gifts in an unsecured area, like the airport, on the streets, or in a market as this attracts negative attention and inevitably leaves someone out.

Spiritual Warfare

When we engage in ministry that is at the growing edge of God's Kingdom, we can expect resistance from the enemy of God. We don't need to go looking for spiritual warfare, but we should be sensitive and open to recognizing it on our mission trip. Spiritual warfare manifests in many forms: nightmares, a sense of spiritual darkness or heaviness, physical illness, etc. It's good to facilitate a discussion about this topic and remain in good spiritual shape through prayer, worship, and scripture reading. Spiritual warfare does not mean avoiding places or situations of spiritual conflict, such as a temple or holy place, but it does mean being ready or on guard for the possible situations that arise in the hearts and lives of team members. Openness to the Holy Spirit and preparedness is crucial.

Part 4: Post-Trip: Debriefing and Telling the Story

Before you leave, think about what will happen when you come home! Life comes crashing back at you. Family, school, and church activities resume their priorities. Integrating the mission experience with life is not an easy thing, but it is one of the more important things to consider.

Before you Go

Schedule two times to be together to share stories, pray together, and talk about your struggles and joys. Plan when and where this should happen. We recommend that the first meeting be within a week to 10 days of the trip, when excitement is still fresh and the team is looking forward to being together. The second meeting may be about a month later, so you can hear how the team is processing and integrating the experience into their lives.

Have people begin to set up opportunities in their churches and with families to share their experience when they return home. Requesting a special time in worship to make a report or scheduling a special family meal can make the re-entry process more rewarding for everyone involved.

On the Trip

When the trip is coming to an end, have a discussion to prepare your team for reverse culture shock and the lack of receptivity about their experience.

Reverse Culture Shock: The experience of re-entering your home culture after being apart from it can be a real shock. People have experienced a new way of life, and begin to recognize the unhealthy or sinful patterns in their own culture. They may react to their own culture with disgust, anger, fear or frustration. This is normal, and it will fade over time.

Lack of Receptivity: Even though the team has experienced some amazing and new things, not everyone at home will be receptive to hearing about the trip. Usually, they will ask, “How was your trip?” in hopes of a 10-20 second response. Caution people that this will occur and help them to prepare for it.

Suggested Questions or Discussion Starters:

- Formulate a “hook line” to get people interested in hearing more about their experience. This would be a short, witty or catchy phrase that prompts a question or the curiosity of the listener.
- Identify 1 or 2 people whom they will especially invite to hear a longer explanation or view pictures from their trip.
- What do you think it will be like when you get home?
- What are you looking forward to when you get home?
- What are you dreading when you get home?
- How do you expect people to respond to you when you get home?

When you get home

Have your scheduled debriefing meetings. Include time for prayer and fellowship. Give every person an opportunity to share.

The goal of de-briefing times is to remember your experiences, reflect on the meaning of it, and begin integrating those things into your life at home.

Ask good, open-ended questions such as:

- What was the best part of the trip?
- Where and how did you see God at work?
- What was the most difficult part of the experience?
- Share an answered prayer.
- What do you wish your church/family could have experienced with you?
- How have you been able to share your story with others?
- How were your expectations fulfilled or not fulfilled?
- What, if anything, has changed in your life since your return?
- What does this mission experience mean for your life/ministry in the future?
- What do you think God has been teaching you through this mission experience?
- What did God show you on your short-term experience that you do not want to forget for the rest of your life?
- How has your worldview changed?
- How will you nourish this new desire to know God and be involved beyond your limited cultural perspective?

Challenge the participants to remain involved in the place/people/projects they experienced through regular prayer, mobilize others to get involved, and possibly provide financial support.

Prepare for opportunities to share your experience as a group. Give participants an opportunity to share their ideas and opportunities to tell the story of their mission trip.

Appendix A: Resource List

The **National Short-term Mission Conference**, <http://www.nstmc.org/>, is the largest gathering of organizations and resources related to short-term missions. Their annual conference includes workshops and plenary sessions that are relevant for people who are taking their first team and for those who are seasoned veterans. If you're in a college setting, a leader in a church, or someone who has been called to be a leader in Short-Term Mission, consider joining others like you to learn about how to do Short-Term Mission with excellence.

Here are several other helpful resources available for ordering online.

- Aeschliman, Gordon, Ed. *The Short Term Mission Handbook*
- Anthony, Michael J., Ed. *Short Term Missions Boom: A Guide to International and Domestic Involvement*
- Borthwick, Paul. *Missions: God's Heart for the World*
- Dearborn, Tim. *Short-Term Missions Workbook: From Mission Tourists to Global Citizens*
- Forward, David C. *The Essential Guide to the Short Term Mission Trip*
- Gibson, Timothy et al, Eds. *Stepping Out: A Guide to Short Term Missions*
- Hoke, Steve and Bill Taylor. *Send Me! Your Journey to the Nations*
- Judge, Cindy. *Before You Pack Your Bag Prepare Your Heart: Short Term Mission Preparation Guide*
- Kitahata, Stacy D. *Having an Excellent Adventure: A Handbook for Responsible Travel*
- Stiles, J. Mack & Leeann. *Mack & Leeann's Guide to Short Term Missions*
- *The Short Term Mission Handbook*. Berry Publishing Services Inc.

Appendix B: Suggested Orientation Activities

Here are just a few ideas to get you started in planning orientation meetings. If you need additional ideas, check the World Mission Initiative office for materials or do a search on the internet.

Scriptures & Questions for Devotional Reflection

Prepare yourself by careful reflection of the scripture and come up with additional guiding questions. Allow time for silent reflection and provide opportunities for others to share their insights.

Philippians 2:1-11

What does it mean to imitate Christ in our mission trip? What are some practical ways you can be a humble servant on this mission trip?

Acts 10

What can we learn from Peter's experience with Cornelius' household for our mission trip?

1 Corinthians 9:19-23

What are the mission principles at work in Paul's efforts to "be all things to all people"? What would it mean for us to become like the people we are serving for the sake of sharing in the blessings of the gospel?

Luke 4:14-30

What does Jesus' sermon say about the nature of his ministry? How can we strive to be holistic in our mission efforts?

Matthew 9:35-38

What can we learn from Jesus' response to the tremendous needs around him? What is the difference between compassion and pity?

Luke 10:1-12

How are Jesus' instructions meaningful to us as we approach our mission trip? What does it mean to go in need of the people we plan to serve?

Romans 12:4-21

How will your team reflect the body of Christ? What is your unique contribution? How will we work together? Paul includes 25 commands for spiritual teamwork, which ones stand out to you?

Discussion Questions

- What are your expectations for this mission trip? What are you hoping to experience?

Admitting our expectations is healthy. If we expect too much or too little from the mission trip, we may miss out on what God wants to do in us through the experience.

- What are your fears or concerns for this mission trip?

It is a good bonding time to share our common fears about the language barrier, strange foods, accommodations, relationships, etc.

- When you are under stress or faced with a difficult situation, how do you typically react?

This can help the group learn about one another and support one another through the process of culture shock or in circumstances of interpersonal conflict.

- Share your testimony. How has God been at work in your life?

In most contexts, sharing your story is not only expected, but very appropriate. Rather than teaching, we can share our own witness of God's work in our lives. You can also ask your hosts or the people you meet to share their testimony with you.

Interactive Culture Learning & Team-Building Activities

Play by the Rules

Give each participant a deck of playing cards and match them with a partner. Give each pair a set a rules. No talking is permitted (to simulate the language barrier). Tell them, "You must play by the rules!" After 2 minutes of play time, ask them to pick up their now mixed deck and find another playing partner. Switch players several times. Obviously, they will end up matched with someone playing by different rules, but they don't know that!

Sample "rules"

- 1) Place the top card face up. The higher value card wins and takes both cards. Turn over the next card and continue to play.
- 2) Place the top card face up. The lower value card wins and takes both cards. Turn over the next card and continue to play.
- 3) Place the top card face up. The red cards (diamonds and hearts) wins and takes both cards. Turn over the next card and continue to play.
- 4) Place the top card face up. The black cards (spades and clubs) wins and takes both cards. Turn over the next card and continue to play.

When the game is over, reflect together about the emotions and problems that arose when they realized they were not playing by the same rules. Who gave up when the rules were contradictory? Who insisted on winning? What is it like to live in another culture where the "rules" or cultural norms are different?

Purpose: To give the group an opportunity to experience what it is like to interact with someone who is playing by different rules. This can be true of cultural norms as well!

What Next?

You will need a sock for this activity. Lay the sock on the floor in front of you. As the leader, instruct the group to help you put on the sock by giving you step by step verbal instructions. No hand motions allowed! Only one person may speak at a time, and only one instruction can be given at a time. After each instruction you say, "What next?" Your job is to pretend you do not know anything about putting on a sock and to literally follow their verbal instructions. (Even if it means putting on the sock over your shoe, or trying to put the sock on from the closed end.)

Purpose: This exercise helps the group to understand the importance of speaking clearly and considering what they are actually communicating. We don't realize how much we take for granted in our conversations! Point out that in cross-cultural communication, it is important to consider the listener. Patience and simple language are appreciated!

Pass the Penny Relay

Divide the group into two teams and have them line up in a row. Each team is given a penny, placed on the back of the first person's hand. The object is to pass the penny from one person to the next until the penny is passed through the entire row. The penny is only allowed to touch the back of hands. If the penny drops, it must start again at the front of the line. Try this with or without talking.

When the activity is complete reflect together on what you learned about each other in the activity. Who took charge? Who became frustrated? Who wanted to win? Who wanted to make sure everyone had fun? Who was the encourager?

Purpose: The object is not to win the race, but for people to begin to think creatively and work together.

Broken Squares

Copy and cut the geometric shapes on the following page. Mix them, and give several shapes to each of 5 people in your group. Everyone else will be observers in this silent game. The goal of the activity is for each person to have a perfect square in front of them. The following rules must be observed.

- 1) No talking
- 2) No pointing or gesturing for a piece
- 3) No taking pieces.
- 4) No creating a central pile of pieces

This game may go on for a while. It takes a fair amount of time for the group to realize that even without talking or taking, they do have a language to communicate with – SHARING/GIVING. The observers should not only be watching as the puzzle is solved, but also watching the group dynamics throughout the exercise.

When they have solved the puzzle, allow each person who was working on the squares an opportunity to share their feelings. Give permission for them to be frustrated; this is a difficult activity! Encourage them to be honest about their feelings toward other group members. Then, give each observer an opportunity to express what they saw happening as the puzzle was solved.

Purpose: To help foster creativity in our communication skills and to give team members an opportunity to bond as they work together to solve a problem.