



LAUNCHPOINT

Pre-Trip Leader's Guide



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INTRODUCTION

Congratulations! Your willingness to serve the Lord through a short-term

missions trip gives you a great opportunity to serve God and grow spiritually. As you lead, remember to follow the guidance of the Spirit. The Lord has called you and your team for this journey, so let him be in control.

Please realize the importance of this trip and the long-term, strategic opportunity. A missions trip should be viewed as an opportunity to experience living with a specific focus on fulfilling the Great Commission. You aren't just going to evangelize and serve; you're going to make disciples – within the local communities, local ministries, and your team. Let the lessons you learn provide a foundation for you to grow even after you return home. View this trip as an opportunity to experience full surrender to the Holy Spirit and continue that submission long after your return home. Additionally, your role, as a leader, is to disciple your team, immersing them in spiritual truths, modeling God's love, and serving them. Try to see the world through their eyes and help frame their vision to see the world through God's eyes. What an awesome opportunity you have - to lead your team to see the world like Jesus!

GUIDE OVERVIEW

We designed this manual to help prepare you for your upcoming short-term missions trip, both personally and as the leader of the team. The tips and recommendations throughout the manual come from numerous years of experience leading teams in multiple contexts and areas of the globe.

The manual provides overarching themes and suggestions, as well as the guide to your training sessions. It's divided into three sections: Spiritual, Cultural, and Physical/Logistical. The Spiritual Section provides spiritual preparation tips and Bible study devotions designed to equip you and the team in important areas to prepare everyone for this spiritual journey. The Cultural Section will help prepare the team to engage with the culture you will serve to ensure nobody unintentionally offends anyone. The Physical/Logistical Section will provide your administrative tasks, as well as physical and mental suggestions to prepare the team for your trip.

The training sessions will be divided into three sections: Spiritual, Cultural, and Physical/Logistical. God will use your meetings and discussions to prepare the team members to be more effective vessels during this journey. Make sure the primary focus of every meeting is on the spiritual preparation for the team because this is a spiritual endeavor. Without the proper spiritual preparation, the team members will miss the opportunity for true spiritual transformation and will be less effective for ministry.

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LEADING A TEAM

Trusting the Lord While Confidently Leading

As the leader, you're called to serve the team and lead them well. Leading them well means you help them follow the leadership of the Holy Spirit. Pray often, seeking guidance throughout the trip. Listen carefully, as the Spirit prompts your heart. Lead confidently, as you follow the Holy Spirit in obedience. Lean on the ministry host for input about ministry, culture, and daily tasks. Trust the Lord is working in the host and the ministry. Remember, the host lives in the culture and serves the ministry all year. Even if you don't agree with the host's decisions, defer to them because they're the ones who live with the results long-term.

Liaison with Missionary

As the leader of the group, one of your responsibilities is to act as the main point of contact for the ministry host (missionary or ministry partner). Having a single point of contact will streamline the process, letting you manage the team, while the ministry host communicates necessary items to you. You should connect with the ministry host as soon as possible to begin building a solid relationship. It's best to connect far in advance of your first training session. Ask the ministry host to send any information they use for short-term teams, especially any cultural guides and ministry descriptions.

For this relationship to work well, it's important that you spend some time getting to know the ministry host and their ministry. You can visit their website or Facebook page to learn more about them. Missionaries appreciate having new partners, so your investing into the relationship will encourage them. Hopefully, this relationship will continue to expand in the future, enabling you to serve alongside the ministry host for many years.

Finally, view the ministry host as part of the missions trip. Leave them feeling encouraged and renewed by your visit. Ask the host how you all can bless them. Ask if they need any supplies. Most missionaries are constantly looking for items but may not proactively ask.

Decision-making

As the team leader, you'll need to make a lot of decisions. If the decision involves ministry or culture, turn to the local ministry leaders and defer to them when possible. They understand and know the culture and communities better than you. There may be times that you will disagree with the decision, but the choice is theirs – submit to their decision and lead the team to follow. In other situations (i.e., issues among the team members), you may need to act alone and should do so confidently. The team can be included in some decisions but tread carefully when involving the entire team. Asking for others' input empowers them, which can cause issues if you choose not to accept their suggestions.

Leadership Tips

Leading a team of volunteers on the mission field is much different from other leadership positions. The volunteers have sacrificed to be on this trip, but you must still lead them with confidence and boldness. Ultimately, though, God is the leader, and you'll need to repeatedly seek his guidance. Some sensitive issues may come up during the trip, and you'll have to navigate those conversations. Deal with issues confidently and remember that God has prepared you for this role. Trust him and do your best.

“

You should begin praying the moment you consider going on a missions trip.

”

Scripture Reading & Memorization

Ps. 1:1-2: *“Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.”*

While prayer is communion with God, reading and memorizing Scripture is learning from and listening to God. Each is essential for your spiritual preparation. God’s Word must be a priority in your life as you prepare for this trip. Set aside time each day to spend in his Word, asking the Spirit to guide you in your understanding and application of the spiritual truths found in his Word. The Book of Acts is a great book to study as you prepare to go on a missions trip.

As you study the Book of Acts, notice the flexibility and surrender Paul shows throughout his journeys. Notice the boldness of Peter as he shares the gospel. Notice the unity and trust of the church as they receive God’s Word and blessings throughout the book. Finally, notice how God provides for his servants as they serve others and take the gospel to the nations – how he never leaves them. Know that God provides, protects, and leads his servants who obediently go out in service for the kingdom.

The most important thing is to spend time in God’s Word, prayerfully seeking the Spirit’s revelation of the Word for your life. Don’t just study the Word, memorize Scripture, and hide the Word in your heart. When Jesus was tempted by Satan in the wilderness, he used Scripture to defend against the attacks from Satan. His Word encourages, sustains, guides, and comforts us when we are surrendered and desirous of its work in our lives.

CULTURAL PREPARATION

You’ll be serving in a different culture, experiencing life and ministry from a different paradigm. Hopefully, you and the team are excited about living and serving alongside the global church. The team’s ability to adapt is imperative to ensure they don’t unintentionally, negatively impact the host ministry. As the leader, you need to be the stable force helping the team adjust, identifying and helping those who are having a difficult time. You’ll need to take extra time to understand the nuances within the new culture and encourage the team to do the same.

Preparing for a New Culture

Phil. 2:3-8: *“Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”*

PHYSICAL/LOGISTICAL PREPARATION

Proper planning helps ensure you have what you need while on the field. This section covers topics that will help you prepare the team. Additionally, this section covers some of the required administrative tasks and paperwork.

Teamwork

One of Jesus' greatest miracles was to take a group of motley men, like the disciples, and use them to begin the Great Commission. He's still using motley groups like your team to advance the gospel. Each team member has a role. As we understand our role, we can share in the responsibility, accountability, and celebration that will follow the ministry effort. To function as a team, you must trust, love, and support one another as God works in and through us. The key will be to serve one another and listen to the local leaders (the ministry host and ministry leadership on the field). Lead your team by example as you submit to the ministry leaders.

Your attitude of humility and flexibility is critical to being a blessing and not a burden to the ministry and team. Remember, this isn't about you...it's about being a vessel for the Holy Spirit to minister to others. The secondary priority is the team. Your position means you're a vital part of the team's ministry. Put the team's needs above your own, serving them whenever possible. By placing yourself at the bottom, God can use you in great ways. Just remember: Ministry > Team > Me. Together, the team will exemplify the Christian body's unity and Christ's glory before a lost and needy world.

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Health Considerations

As you prepare for traveling, make sure your health is part of your preparation. The health system where you will be serving will most likely be different from the health system you are used to at home. **If you have any health conditions or concerns, make sure to discuss your trip with your doctor or health professional to get advice on how best to prepare and what to do if you have issues on the trip.** Additionally, make sure all members of the team understand the risks associated with traveling to another country and the importance of getting medical clearance. Keep in mind that it may be difficult to find medical care where you're going. Specific regions also require specific vaccinations, so check the CDC website to determine what ones you'll need to get. You can see the full list at: <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/list/>. Your ministry host can provide valuable insight on this, as well.

To be on the safe side, each member should pack prescription medications, over-the-counter medications, and complete a medical history form before the trip. A suggested medical form can be found in **Appendix J**.

Make sure to pack prescription medications and over-the-counter medications for potential issues on the trip. Any prescription medications should be packed in their prescription containers to prove it's a qualified prescription, in case questioned at customs. You should pack enough for the

TRAINING SESSION ONE

Session Overview

Theme: Christians have one common mission, and it should guide everything we do.

Main Points:

- Jesus' authority is the foundation for missions. Without it, we can't do anything.
- Jesus commands Christians to actively go and make disciples of all nations.
- We're to model Christian living to a new believer, in the same way that Christ models it for us.

Agenda

- Begin session in prayer. Since it's the first session, you should lead this time (model how the team can pray). Pray over the following things:
 - The host ministry
 - The community being served
 - The team and team member families
 - God's glory and the advancement of the gospel
- Team introductions: Have each member talk about themselves, any missions experience, and what they hope to see God do on this trip. Be creative in how you approach this time.
- Explain how the training sessions will be conducted and review the schedule, encouraging everyone to attend all sessions to ensure unity and the proper preparation for maximum impact.
- Spiritual Focus
 - Teach the Bible Study Lesson (using the notes provided).
 - Reinforce the main point of the passage.
 - Remind everyone this is a spiritual journey, prioritizing the spiritual aspects.
 - Encourage prayer and journaling throughout the training in preparation for the field.
- Cultural Focus
 - Pass out Operation World guide about the location and walk through the major areas
 - Pass out "Phrases in the Native Language" (if applicable) and encourage the team to begin reviewing and trying to learn the phrases
 - Provide a high-level overview of the ministry concentration of the host
- Physical/Logistical Focus
 - Discuss the high-level itinerary for the trip
 - Discuss any special immunizations needed and other medical considerations
 - Discuss visa requirements (if applicable)
 - Ensure all team members have a valid passport that doesn't expire for at least six months after you RETURN from the trip
 - Distribute all required paperwork and discuss deadlines for returning all paperwork

- Encourage everyone to send support letters; walk through the suggestions in **Appendix G**
- Setup Next Meeting
 - Spiritual: Living surrendered for Christ. Read Galatians 2, focusing on 2:20.
 - Cultural: Cultural “Dos and Don’ts” and ministry paradigm for the field
 - Physical/Logistical: Ministry details and packing lists
- End the session in prayer. Ask someone to lead the prayer to get the team used to praying out loud. Remind everyone to get comfortable praying out loud before they get on the field.

Bible Study Commentary

Our Mission, His Mandate (Matt. 28:16-20)

As you prepare for your short-term missions trip, it’s only appropriate to begin with the foundation for all Christian missions activity – a foundation established by Jesus, himself.

If you’re a Christian, you should follow Jesus in every aspect of your life, submitting to his leadership, obeying his commands, and aligning with his life. Jesus taught his disciples (which includes disciples today) about God’s design for life. But of all the commands, of all the teachings, of all the examples of love, our Lord left his disciples with one final mandate, and it serves as every Christian’s mission.

“ But of all the commands, of all the teachings, of all the examples of love, our Lord left his disciples with one final mandate, and it serves as every Christian’s mission. ”

We are talking about “*the Great Commission*,” which is Jesus’s mandated mission for every Christian. Most of us have read, heard, and possibly even studied the Great Commission, but it’s important that we truly understand the mission which defines our lives. You might be thinking, the Great Commission is simple – it says go! Well, why don’t we look at what Jesus really says in Matthew 28, and hopefully, you’ll see much more.

To set the context, Jesus had taught his disciples for three years, was crucified, buried, and had risen from the dead. In Matthew 28, he gathered his disciples together for a final time of teaching, a final point of preparation for their life mission. Read Matt.28:16-20.

The eleven apostles traveled a week’s journey from Jerusalem to Galilee, gathering with others on the mountain to hear from the Lord. As he taught, he gave their mission. The following three ingredients help us understand our mission best: Jesus’s authority, his mandate, and his promise.

APPENDIX B

PRAYER TOPICS AND SUGGESTIONS

Prayer for You

Pray God will glorify himself through your ministry.
Pray for humility, flexibility, servant-mindedness, and an obedient heart.
Pray for opportunities to share your faith and boldness to seize the opportunities.
Pray for a sensitivity to the Spirit's guidance throughout this journey.
Pray for a strengthening of your faith.
Pray for a transformation of your heart, eyes, and mind as the Spirit guides you on this trip.
Pray for God to use this experience to create a passion within you for all people as you return home.

Prayer for Team

Pray for the team leader to be guided by the Spirit in all areas.
Pray for team unity.
Pray for your relationships to grow with one another.
Pray for safety in travel and health on the field.
Pray for humility and a flexible spirit among all team members.
Pray for cultural sensitivity and understanding.
Pray for peace and comfort for family left at home.
Pray for the team members to have a passion for others as they return home.

Prayer for Local Ministry

Pray for God to glorify himself through his work among this community.
Pray for God to prepare the hearts of the people you will serve alongside.
Pray for God to protect Christians in the country as they share Christ.
Pray for relationships with the national believers.
Pray for provision for the ministry host and all those serving in the ministry.
Pray for a unified spirit among the nationals and a willingness to serve together.
Pray for new seeds of ministry and the gospel to be scattered on this journey.
Pray for the families of the nationals, for safety and provision.

Prayer for Community You Will Serve

Pray for God to prepare the hearts of the people you will serve.
Pray for the Lord to send laborers into the harvest fields.
Pray for a willingness to hear the gospel among the lost people.
Pray for the salvation of many people through the ministry from this trip.
Pray for churches in the country to reach out to meet the needs of the people around them.



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