

PRE/POST TRIP RESOURCES

This faith-forming experience has intentionally emphasized the following values for your students to continue focusing on after returning home to further develop faith for life:

- The Gospel Message
- Worship
- God's Word
- Seeing a Broken World in Need
- Serving Others
- Intergenerational Relationships

Coming home from something like this can be a spiritual high, or it can be a bit disorienting. Students will have experienced much, seen much, and shared much together, so coming back to real life can be a letdown.

That is why follow-up is essential. It is simply not enough to get them ready to go, raise the funds, and then have a wonderful experience. Your job as a youth leader isn't finished until the follow-up is complete.

With the right planning, you can enlist the church and the adults who supported the trip to participate in the follow-up as well. You can equip them with the post-trip questions so they can help students process their experience and integrate what they've learned into their daily life.

BEFORE YOU LEAVE FOR YOUR TRIP:

Equip your church to be Sending Partners and Follow-Up Partners. Almost every youth group going on a trip asks that adults support them with prayer and finances. Prepare an announcement or bulletin insert for while you're gone that will prepare the adults in the church for post-trip follow-up.

Ask your pastor, or whoever can represent you while you're gone, to make an announcement. You might use words like: "As a church, we've made a commitment to pray for and encourage the students who are gone. Let's ask God to increase their level of thankfulness, generosity, prayer and passion for missions. Let's ask that God would grant them each an understanding of their personal strengths and gifts as well as the ability to deal with issues in their own walk with Christ."

"When these students get back, let's not ask them: 'How was your trip? Did you have fun?' or 'What did you do?' Instead, try questions like: 'What is something you will miss from your trip? What did this experience make you more thankful for? Whom did you serve, and what impact did they have on you? What is your best memory of the trip? What is one thing God did in your life this week? What was the funniest situation? Who is going to help keep you accountable for your continued growth?'"

You can even consider putting a list of suggested questions in the bulletin on Sunday morning to give people ideas of constructive questions to ask the students.

DEBRIEFING ON THE WAY HOME:

As an adult leader, you have a great opportunity to find out what the students are thinking and how they feel about the experience and their lives after the experience.

After a trip like this, it's good to ask, "What's next?"

The first step is to understand what you think and how you feel about this experience, focusing on the people you learned from, those you served with and the principles God taught you. Hopefully, you learned a lot about yourself and understand better how God is working. A good post-trip plan will include:

- **Debriefing:** what I think and how I feel about what just happened
- **Follow-up:** what I need to focus on for the next 21 days to continue what is happening
- **Follow-through:** what character traits do I want to keep so that this trip becomes a significant part of my life journey

In order to take what you've learned and work it into your everyday life, you'll have to share those thoughts with people at home and stay connected to your church. This short trip will become a great part of your life journey if you keep working on what you've learned.

By the time you get home, you'll want to be ready to share one story about how the week impacted your life. When people at home ask, "What did you do?" they often really mean, "Whom did you serve, and how did the week impact your life?" Be ready to answer those questions. Here are a few other questions to answer with your team.

You can actually write these down and cut the phrases apart. On the way home, you can put them in a hat, and ask a student to grab a piece of paper and answer the question to open up the discussion.

- **What are the top three things I will miss from my experience?**
- **What are the top three things I'm most thankful for at home?**
- **What is one thing I have to remember?**
- **What did God communicate to me?**
- **What was the funniest situation?**
- **Who will I share with when I get home so I can be held accountable for continuing this growth?**

10 ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS TO HAVE ANSWERS FOR:

1. Who helped send you on this trip, and how will you share with them the impact the experience has had on you? Specifically remember that there were:
 - People praying for you.
 - People who gave money toward your trip.
 - People who took care of your responsibilities while you were gone.

These people are called "Sending Supporters," and they will want to hear about the impact of the trip on your life and on the lives of the people you served. They might ask you, "What did you do?" But what they really want you to answer is, "How did this trip touch your life and the lives of the people you served?"

2. What did you learn from the people in the community this week?
3. What surprised you this week? What disappointed you? How did that impact your week?
4. Who/what do you specifically want to pray for when you get home?
5. When you think of this trip, what is one specific snapshot that comes to mind?
6. How do you want your youth group to be involved in service and justice at home?
7. When you think about going home, what are you anxious about? What are you excited about?
8. What do you hope will change about your life as a result of this experience? Who can help you make those changes or hold you accountable for them?
9. How could/should your church change as a result of your team's experience?
10. How are you going to talk with others about this experience? If you were going to share a sixty-second version of this week, what would you say?

NOTE: Some of these questions are adapted from Kara Powell and Brad Griffin, *Deep Justice Journeys: 50 Activities to Move from Mission Trips to Missional Living* (Grand Rapids: YS/Zondervan, 2009).

FOLLOW UP – YOUR FIRST 21 DAYS:

1. Stay Connected with People:

It can be difficult to return from a trip and say goodbye to teammates who understand exactly what you are talking about in regards to the experience. Don't let this feeling take away your energy to apply all you learned to your everyday life. Service and discipleship belong in the everyday lives of Christ-followers.

2. Share with Your Sending Supporters:

Send a letter to anyone who helped you raise money for your trip and who prayed for you. Share about the people you served and what you learned. Ask them to keep praying for you through the next three weeks as you take what you've learned into your everyday life.

3. Have a Team Meeting:

Plan a follow-up meeting once you're home. Bring anything that might help you remember the commitments you made or what impacted you (e.g. a short note, a journal or a picture to remind yourself of a story or person).

Here are Some Things to Emphasize at Such a Meeting:

- Remembering what God has done. Focus on changed lives and not merely on the tasks accomplished. How did the work actually help the Host Church and the people/organizations receiving the work?
- What are you thankful for now that you're home?
- Praying for your team, those that hosted you and those you worked with/for.
- Sharing photos that were taken by different people on the trip.
- Journaling. If you kept a journal, refer to it so you remember all you did and learned. You could even share some of your entries in an email to your teammates and encourage them to share what they learned on the trip as well. Keep journaling.

4. Plan Some Next Steps as a Group:

- Continue to pray for those people who impacted your life: hosts, community members or church members.
- Create future goals based on what you learned about yourself and ask a leader or a friend to keep you accountable.
- Determine how to use your specific skills/gifts to serve in your church and community.
- Decide how you will increase prayer in your church for the community.
- Look for specific ministry opportunities similar to those you were involved with. Are there similar opportunities you can be involved with at home? Don't just assume that there is or isn't; do some research. If not, can your church start something to meet the need in your community?

5. Plan Some Next Steps Individually:

- What situation in my home life do I need to give up to God? Were things revealed during my trip that I can act on now?
- How can this experience enhance my service at church?
- What did I learn about the spiritual gifts I have been given, and how can I put these into action at home?
- What spiritual commitments or goals do I want to set for myself in the next month? In the next year?
- How will I do some research on local needs that I can help to meet?
- Remember: if you are setting goals, ask God for direction and for wisdom. Don't set goals first and then ask him to bless them later. Goals should be **SMART**:

Specific **M**easurable **A**ttainable **R**ealistic **T**imely

IF YOU/YOUR GROUP IS GOING TO CONSIDER ANOTHER EXPERIENCE LIKE THIS:

Evaluate the Specific Experience:

- Are you interested in doing something similar again next year?
- What fundraisers, in addition to those done this year, would you suggest?
- List anything you would change.

PRE-TRIP SMALL GROUP CONVERSATIONS

LESSON 1: WHY AM I DOING THIS?

1. **Why are you doing this? Circle as many as apply to you:**

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|------------------------------------|---|
| a. Something to do | i. Fun |
| b. Did it before | j. My friend invited me |
| c. Someone told me I would like it | k. Learn about God |
| d. Adventure | l. Worship |
| e. Travel | m. Learn a skill (painting, cleaning, etc.) |
| f. Serve others | n. Boring summer otherwise |
| g. Grow close to God | o. My parents are making me |
| h. Nothing else to do | |

2. **Tell the group three of the reasons you circled and why you circled them.**

3. **Are some reasons to go on SERVE better than others? Why or why not?**

4. **Read this passage from I Peter 4:10-11** — 10 Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. 11 If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

5. **What does verse 11 tell us about where to find the strength to serve?**

6. **How can this passage shape your prayers for the trip before you go (as a group and as individuals)?**

7. **Close in prayer, using the passage above.**

LESSON 2: WHO AM I SERVING?

(Note to Leaders: can divide up into 4 small groups and have each group take a numbered section.)

“SERVE” is the name of the trip, and we usually think about the people in the place we are going to as the ones we are serving. But actually....

1. **The first one we are serving is God.** We serve God as a response for all he has done for us.
 - Name two things God has done for you recently:

2. **The second group we serve are our Teammates:** everyone who is going on this trip with us!
 - What’s one way in which you can serve the group? (e.g. I’m good at singing/painting/cleaning up after meals/ coming up with games to play/ etc....)

 - What’s one way in which the group could serve you? (e.g. I need it quiet to sleep/ Don’t talk to me in the morning/ help me avoid my food allergy/ pray for ___)

3. **The third group we are serving is our Host Church.** Many of these folks take vacation days to volunteer. They give up time with their families to be with us. They put in long days preparing for us to come, hosting us, and then sending us off.
 - If you were part of the Host Church team, what would you want from the guests who are coming on SERVE?

 - What is one way in which we can all serve our Host Church together?

4. **Finally, we are serving the citizens in our Host City.** These could be small business owners, the staff of city parks, families, children, senior citizens, immigrants, homeless people...
 - What can we do that will make people glad to see us come?

 - What can we do that will make people sad to see us go?

 - How can we leave this place better than we found it?

5. **Close in prayer by going through each of the four areas of service.**

LESSON 3: WHAT WILL MAKE THIS A GOOD EXPERIENCE?

1. **Finish this sentence: SERVE will be a good experience for me if . . .**
2. **Share your sentence with your group.**
3. **Name two things you can do to make this a good experience:**
4. **Name two things someone else (large group, small group, friends, leaders) can do to make this a good experience:**
5. **Read James 5:13-18** — 13 Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise. 14 Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. 15 And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven. 16 Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective. 17 Elijah was a human being, even as we are. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. 18 Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.
6. **How can you pray specifically about your trip between now and when you leave, both as a group and on your own?** (Think about times of day, phone alarms, texting, etc.)
7. **Close in prayer, using James 5 as your guide.**

POST-TRIP SMALL GROUP CONVERSATIONS

LESSON 1: WHAT DO I WANT TO REMEMBER?

1. Finish at least three of these sentences:

- The best work site was...

- One worship song I learned this week was ...

- The funniest thing that happened this week was...

- The best meal I had was...

- The coolest thing about our day off was...

- One thing I loved about my small group was...

- My new practice of gratitude is...

Go around and share how you ended your sentences!

2. One Bible passage I learned about this week that was new to me was....

3. One faith habit I will continue is...

4. Someone who can check with me to see that I keep the habit is...

5. Read: Psalm 136:1-9, 23-26, with the whole group reading “his love endures forever.”

6. Close in prayer by having everyone say one thing they are thankful for and having everyone else respond, “For his love endures forever.”

LESSON 2: WHOM CAN I SERVE NOW?

The goal of SERVE is that our hearts learn to love serving God and serving others everywhere and at all times. We don't have to get in a van and go to a different city to serve!

1. **Read this passage, from I Thessalonians 5:23-24:** “May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it.”
2. **What is God calling you to now?** Come up with one practical way in which you can serve in four of the following six categories:
 - People I live with (family members):

 - People I learn with (teachers and students):

 - People I play with (teammates, video game players, people who share your hobbies):

 - People I work with (boss, co-workers, employees):

 - People I worship with (pastor, church staff, people who sit near me in church):

 - People in my city (police/fire, humane society, neighbors, first responders, etc.):
3. **Go around the group and share two of your best ideas.**
4. **Read the passage again, out loud, all together:** “May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it.”
5. **Close in prayer, asking God to continue to grow your desire to serve.**