

# 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**:

**S**pecific **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: WHAT IS A BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW?

When I was in the fourth grade, a change began to happen in my life of which I was unaware. At the beginning of the fifth grade, an eye test was administered and I failed horribly. I couldn't read the third line down. I was diagnosed as nearsighted. Myopia. I could only see things that were very close to my face. There was a reason I wasn't doing my math homework: I couldn't read it from the blackboard! Until I had an eye test, I had no idea something was wrong, I just assumed the world was fuzzy for everyone.

The solution, of course, was to have my vision corrected by glasses. Corrective lenses helped my eyes focus properly so I could see things for how they really were. There actually was math homework posted on the blackboard every day. As hard as I tried, my teachers and family didn't buy my excuse of ignorance: "I just couldn't see it!". I was still responsible for not doing my work.

The analogy here should be in focus. We all suffer from our own versions of poor vision, whether it is inaccurate assumptions, unfair stereotypes or fictitious expectations of the world and the people in it. We all have a diagnosis of myopia and can only see things that are close to us: religious beliefs, political position, family values and cultural background. Like my fuzzy, uncorrected vision, these immediate values can seem right because they are all that we can see. The rest of the world is too blurry to make any sense.

Our worldview needs to be further than the end of our own noses. But in order for our myopia to be corrected, we need an honest diagnosis and the appropriate set of lenses to correct our vision. Having a guided experience that is immersed in a biblical worldview is the best means of correction. That is exactly what SERVE is all about!

So I ask you the same question that the optometrist asked me when fitting me for my first pair of glasses: "Do you want to see the world you've been missing?"

## PRE-LESSON DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

Write the following questions somewhere students can see them (on a whiteboard, chart paper or have them printed out). Invite students to get into pairs or small groups, depending on how big your group is, to share their thoughts, reassuring them it is okay to be wrong or not have an answer. After they have had time to discuss these questions, invite groups to share with the whole group. It might be helpful to have a whiteboard or chart paper to record their answers on.

- **What is a worldview?**
- **What does it mean to have a biblical worldview?**
- **What do you think are essential truths to embrace in order to have a biblical worldview?**

## TEACHING

A *worldview* is how you see and understand the world, essentially a lens through which your experiences and beliefs are filtered.

A *biblical worldview* is when the lens through which you view the world is formed by the Bible and belief in the God of the Bible.

Read 2 Timothy 3:16-17: All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Read Hebrews 4:12: For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

In order to develop a biblical worldview, we must first agree that what these verses state is true: that all Scripture is God-breathed and the word of God is alive and active. The Bible is the very word of God! If we believe this to be true, we can use the Bible to shape how we view the world.

Here is a simple framework that we will use to guide us in thinking about what must be included in a Biblical worldview: Creation. Fall. Redemption. Restoration.

An easier way to remember this might be with 4 G's: Good. Guilt. Grace. Gratitude.

*Note: This is NOT meant to be a full deep dive into a biblical worldview, but a simple introductory framework or overview.*

## DISCUSSION:

Invite students to once again pair up or meet in small groups. Ask them to think through what these words might mean in the context of a biblical worldview. Invite them to think of Scripture they may know that could correspond to the words. Give them several minutes to discuss and take notes, then have them share with the larger group.

**Good:** God made the world, and he made us, and it was good.

**Guilt:** Sin entered the world through Adam and Eve, but we are now all sinful and cannot save ourselves.

**Grace:** The penalty for our sin is death, and Jesus died on the cross to take that penalty for us. We are saved by the free gift of grace.

**Gratitude:** We have new life and live lives of gratitude for salvation and his continued work in our lives which helps us to become more like him and restores all that was broken.

What does having a Biblical worldview have to do with our SERVE trip?

What we believe about God and about the world will affect how we view others, how we treat others how we serve others, how we love others and so much more.

Perhaps you aren't sure what your worldview is or what you believe to be right and true. That's okay. Perhaps you've been raised to believe certain things about the world and God, but you're questioning those things and aren't sure if they're true. Perhaps you've never really thought about what you believe in this way. Again, that's okay! The invitation is to be open to learning about God and his world on our SERVE trip.

**Prayer:** Close in a time of prayer together.



# PRE-TRIP SMALL GROUP CONVERSATIONS

## LESSON: POPPING THE BUBBLE

As you begin to think about your SERVE trip, what sorts of thoughts are going through your mind? What does your heart feel? What dreams do you have for your experience? What fears do you have? What do you think will be most challenging to you?

We all have fears about leaving our comfort zones, even if it's only for a short bit, and experiencing something unknown. We can sometimes live in a bubble - we get comfortable in our routines of school, church, sports, clubs, family and jobs, and we usually interact with the same people throughout our days.

SERVE is an amazing opportunity to pop our bubbles and expand our understanding of who God is and how he is at work in the world. You will have an opportunity to meet a lot of new people including other students and leaders, the host team who planned your week, and the people you interact with as you serve. You will have an opportunity to work hard in the communities where we will be staying and to learn more about God through biblical teachings, worship, devotionals and small groups. There is so much opportunity for learning and growth throughout this incredible week!

In order to have an open mind that is willing to learn and experience new things, it is healthy to have some time to ask yourself what you are really thinking, feeling and anticipating about this trip before you go. The Greek philosopher Plato is famous for quoting Socrates, "The unexamined life is not worth living." It is helpful to examine your own thoughts about where you will be going, what you will be seeing and what your response to your experiences might be.

## ACTIVITY:

You will need to prep this activity ahead of time. You will need twelve pieces of paper, poster board or chart paper and enough writing utensils for the group. It is helpful if all of the writing utensils are uniform so that students don't worry that others will know what they wrote. Write one of the words from the list below on a piece of paper. Place the papers around the meeting room: scattered on tables, taped to the walls or whatever makes sense for your space.

Participants will walk around the room and find the papers with one word on them. On each paper, have them write out the first thought they associate with the word. Encourage students that there are no wrong answers.

- **Church**
- **Poverty**
- **Brokenness**
- **Community**
- **Beauty**
- **Safety**
- **Fear**
- **Missions**
- **The Great Commission**
- **Wealth**
- **Hope**
- **God**

After everyone has written something down on each piece of paper, review some of the answers that people wrote down together. Talk about any repeated themes or answers that stand out to you. Have a conversation around fear and hope, missions or God.



## **SCRIPTURE:**

Read the following verses:

Romans 12:2

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Psalm 32:8-11

I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go;

I will counsel you with my loving eye on you.

Do not be like the horse or the mule,

which have no understanding

but must be controlled by bit and bridle

or they will not come to you.

Many are the woes of the wicked,

but the Lord's unfailing love

surrounds the one who trusts in him.

Rejoice in the Lord and be glad, you righteous;

sing, all you who are upright in heart!

As we begin to “pop our bubbles” of what we think we know to be true about the world, God, and ourselves, let us be mindful that we want only God's truth to guide us. We want God to renew our minds, in order for us to better discern his truth. We want God to instruct us, not the world.

**Prayer:** Spend time in prayer and ask God to make your minds and hearts soft and open to experiencing all that He wants to show you during your SERVE week.



# POST-TRIP SMALL GROUP CONVERSATIONS

## LESSON: ALREADY, NOT YET

For a period of time in the 1990s, there was a cultural phenomenon that swept the country. It was everywhere: dentist office wall decor, large books for sale at Barnes and Noble and even on popular TV shows like Seinfeld and Friends. “What was this craze?!” you ask. It was these posters known as “Magic Eye” posters that featured some repetitive geometric pattern with a neon rainbow gradient that, to the unmagical eye, looked like some weird pattern. But if you stared at it long enough, the geometric pattern gave way to a hidden, magical 3D object within it such as a dolphin, a sea turtle, Bart Simpson, cross or some other “magical” object. The fascinating part of the experience was being able to see the hidden image, but the real treat was that once you saw it, you couldn’t unsee it.

## SCRIPTURE

Read Philippians 3: 8-14: “What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining the resurrection from the dead.

Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.”

## TEACHING

Now that you’ve returned from your SERVE trip, it may seem like the experience is done and over, and it’s time to look forward to the next thing on your calendar. Your service and learning are not over, however. You’ve been invited to live in the tension of the broken and beautiful, and that work doesn’t end now that you’re home. Hopefully, the memories you’ve made, the work you’ve done, the lessons you’ve heard, and the discussions you’ve had are a bit longer lasting than a Magic Eye poster. Once you’ve seen the brokenness and beauty in you and around you, you can’t unsee it. Hopefully, your vision has been permanently altered so that you see yourself, the world, and others more like how God sees all of them: with love, with care, with concern, as beautiful, as healed, and as whole again.

## DISCUSSION:

Think back to the beginning when you first signed up to do SERVE. Think back to the first meetings and discussions.

- What about your worldview has changed, shifted or been altered? What caused this change?
- What is something that you were previously “blind” to or couldn’t see clearly that you now see with clarity and detail? Something you can no longer unsee?
- Who or what has been instrumental in helping correct your vision?
- Maybe you’ve always had a clear belief of your personal attitudes, values and understanding of the world and people around you. What has it been like to continue on this journey of growing and serving? In what ways will you continue helping others and continue growing yourself?
- What was helpful in thinking about the world through the lenses of broken and beautiful? What was unhelpful?
- What will you take away from this experience and share with others?

**Prayer:** God, we thank you for the experiences you have given us through SERVE. We thank you for meeting us where we were and for loving us for who we are. Thank you for the opportunity to see glimpses of how you are at work in our lives and our world. Thank you for holding it all together. Please be with us as we remember the images of the people and experiences we had during SERVE. Help us each to become more like the people of love and beauty that you made us to be, for your glory and for the good of those around us. Amen.



