



Prep & Training

International Trips



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A Love Letter to Short-Term Missionaries

Dear friends, and I mean that. If you're going on a short term mission trip this year or any time in the future, then you're my kind of people.

I took my first trip when I was 15 and was completely unprepared. My cousin was 16 and we went on the journey to Asia by ourselves. We made every possible mistake known to man including offending the nationals and getting caught in a bathroom emergency sans toilet paper. In the past 17 years of mission experiences I've seen a bit of everything. So, from my heart to yours, here are some thoughts before you trek across the world for Jesus.

1. WHAT YOU ARE DOING IS GOOD AND VERY IMPORTANT

It costs a lot of money to take these trips, not to mention the fact that you're probably sacrificing valuable vacation or free-time to serve around the world. But, in spite of all the personal cost, the impact of this trip on the places you go (but maybe even more so on your soul) doesn't have a price tag.

Every conversation you have, well you drill, or church you build has lasting impact in God's economy. Sure, you might not know the language personally, and you might mess up a few cultural customs, but your time as a missionary in this place is valuable and important.

2. KEEP EVERYTHING IN PERSPECTIVE

You can always tell what someone is really like as soon as you get them away from their home and culture. If this is your first trip, and even if it's your 30th, you might be in for a freak out or two when everyone around you is not playing by the rules of how the "world works" (for you, that is). It's ok, just try your best, take some deep breaths, pray a lot, and realize that your successes are great, but you're not the mission champion of the world. And, if you mess up, it's alright too.

3. YOU ARE NOT THE EXPERT

This is probably my strongest word of advice to you-we're so glad you're going, we're pumped to have you in our country, but just do us all a favor and follow. You can take risks and do some great things, but that guy, even the weird one wearing the Petra t-shirt who has been living in this country for years, knows this culture way better than you, that's why it's his job. So, even if you saw the National Geographic special, just wait for your time to shine and don't assume that you are interpreting the events around you correctly.

4. YOU'RE ABOUT TO GET TIRED

Mission trips are exhausting because you don't sleep very much and you output a ton of work and energy. Processing new cultures and new language is tough too. But, they're super tiring especially because spiritual output is more draining than anything else. It's because the spiritual component combines emotional, physical, mental, and the invisible "extra" energy that connects soul to God. And afterwards, you're beat tired. Expect this and you won't be surprised. Try to build some time in your day for a nap and if you can't, get ready to sleep on that plane on the way home.

5. YOU JUST NEVER KNOW...YOU MIGHT CHANGE THE WORLD.

Every once in a while these experiences turn into something more. In 2005 my wife and I led a group of knucklehead teenagers to Taiwan. They were between the ages of 14-17 and most of them were pretty high maintenance (not all of them, and if you're reading this, you know who you are). I was only 24 and I was leading this trip from NJ to Asia. We stayed up way too late, did some potentially dangerous things, and made a whole lot of memories. We laughed a lot, we prayed a ton, we sang and we cried. And then one day it seemed like the Kingdom of God just exploded around us.

In a two day period we saw over 10 people give their hearts to follow Jesus. There had been no other response all summer and after these two days, nothing more. All over the city in cafés, in hotel rooms, and even in weird Karaoke bars, people who were hungry for God said "yes" to his work in their lives.

We currently have a church plant, a coffee shop, full-time missionaries and interns. That's not all because of that summer, but a lot of it is. And most of those annoying kids on the trip are now pastors, church planters, missionaries, and church leaders. These trips can form you more than you realize.

So, you just never know. Sure, be realistic about how much you can actually do but at the same time, if you're obsessed with God and hungry to see Him act, He will do it. And every once in a while he'll even surprise you.



Who is Envision?

Envision is a movement within the Christian and Missionary Alliance that specializes in missional engagement.

Envision empowers and equips followers of Jesus to live well in a post-everything world. The two branches, Sites & Labs, provide experiences that move people & shape culture.

ENVISION SITES

Envision Sites offer the opportunity to participate in what God is doing in over 20 cities both in the US and around the world. You can be involved in ministry connecting local churches, bringing social justice, and seeing God's Kingdom transform major urban settings. You will also experience discipleship as Site leaders pour into you and give you opportunities to grow no matter where you find yourself on your faith journey.

Envision Trips (7-10 days)

Envision Internships (1 month - 2 years)

Envision GiveBack (give time, money, & skills)

ENVISION LABS

Envision Labs is a branch of Envision offering experiences that shape your leadership and faith. Films explore the intersection of culture and faith, sharing stories that challenge paradigms and inspire movement. Campaigns offer a tangible way to make a difference in issues of social justice globally. Summit provides young influencers with a week-long leadership experience in an international city.

Envision Films

Envision Campaigns

Envision Summit

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Choosing Your Team

The most successful missions teams have been vetted to make sure your team will work well together and be a blessing to the ministry you will be serving. You will want to have everyone fill out an application (see our template in this handbook).

You may also want to conduct interviews with interested people to help ensure they will positively contribute to your trip.

The ideal team member has a heart to serve and is flexible, in good health, has the endurance to withstand heat and difficult conditions. Many short-term trips will require manual labor or walking long distances. Many of our sites are located in places where they will experience more extreme heat than they are used to.

When the applicant commits to serving on your team, we suggest you ask them to make a non-refundable deposit to hold their spot. This will help you separate out serious team members from those who are just looking. This will help to cover the nonrefundable deposit required by Envision based on your estimated team size.

Suggested amount: \$100-\$150.



Promoting Your Trip

Advertise your trip with the dates and cost in your church community. Make sure you have your budget in place before you announce the trip.

To start your advertising we suggest you talk with your senior pastor, communications director, or whoever is in charge of communications at your church. Inform them of your need to promote this missions trip. Depending on the communications guidelines at your church, consider some of the following options:

- Bulletin announcements
- Direct mailers
- Verbal announcements during Sunday morning worship services
- Verbal announcements at small groups or Sunday school classes
- Video announcement
- Your church's website
- Ask your pastor to include your trip it as a sermon illustration

Once you have promoted the general information about your trip, host an interest meeting for anyone thinking about joining the team. They are not committing to the trip by coming to the meeting. It's simply a way for them to hear more, pick up an application, and ask any questions they may have.

Set a deadline for trip applications and explain how to apply. Not all applicants may be accepted to the team, so be clear how the process works at the interest meeting.



Budgeting

You will want to consider the following additional expenses as you determine your final trip cost for your team:

- Airfare
- Envision registration cost
- Workbooks and journals
- Team t-shirts
- Extra luggage fees
- Transportation to/from the airports
(gas, toll, rental vans, meals for drivers, etc.)
- Gifts for your missionaries
- Emergency medical needs
- Vacation Bible School supplies
- Other ministry supplies
- Tips
- Visa costs
- Leader costs



Fundraising

Advertise your trip with the dates and cost in your church community. Make sure you have your budget in place before you announce the trip.

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Recommended Tool: TeamSend

TeamSend is one of our partners here at Envision. TeamSend offers an online tool created to help you and your team simplify funding and increase communication before, during, and after your short-term trip. It's similar to tools like Indiegogo and Kickstarter, but is designed exclusively to assist churches and nonprofits.

SETTING UP A TEAMSEND PAGE HELPS YOU:

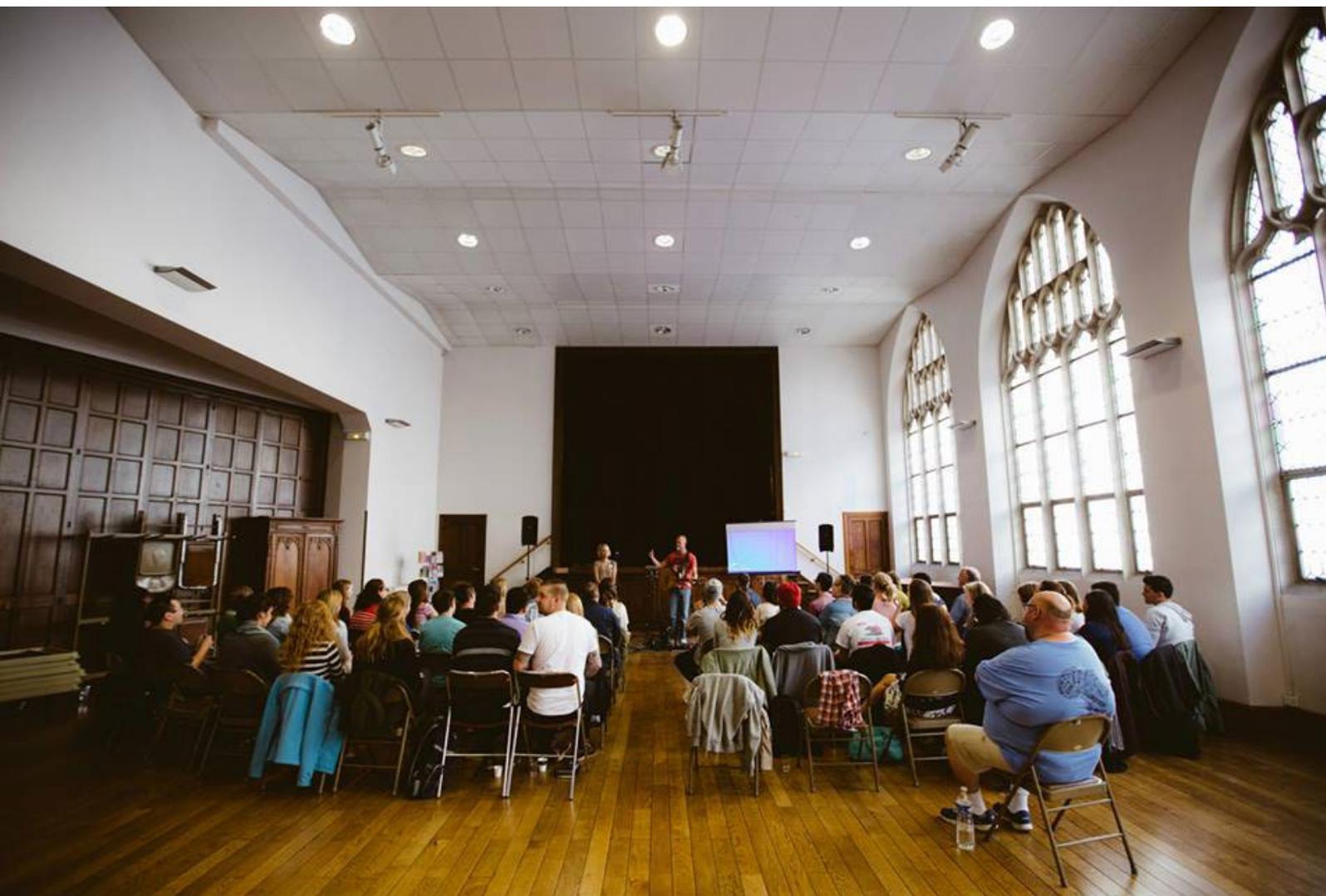
- Introduce your team, share the story of your trip, and announce your fundraising goal
- Serve supporters with simple and secure online giving, and tax-deductible benefits
- Keep everyone updated on fundraising events and team preparations
- Stay connected to your support team throughout the trip by posting blogs and photos
- Blog your final report and express appreciation to all of your supporters

WHAT DOES IT COST?

Using TeamSend is free. There are small credit card and processing fees, but these are covered by donations so that the team does not pay anything for the service.

HOW DO I START?

Go to www.teamsend.org to create a user account and start setting up your team page! (If you'd like to check out an example, go [here](#)).



Your Church Support

It is important that your short-term missions trip is supported by your church leadership and the congregation as a whole. Here are some ways your church can support you:

- Give official blessing or sanction to the trip.
- Provide letters of endorsement on church stationery.
- Let individuals share with the congregation in services.
- Host informational meetings about the trip.
- Publicize the trip.
- Place information in the congregation's monthly newsletter.
- Put inserts in the weekly church bulletin.
- Provide partial funding from the church budget.
- Help in getting out a support-raising letter.
- Organize prayer support.
- Organize fundraising events within the church.



Packing Tips

Here are a few general tips to follow when it's time to pack:

1. MAKE SURE YOU CAN CARRY YOUR LUGGAGE.

Be sure to use a suitcase with wheels or a duffel bag that is easily carried. You may be required to carry or drag your luggage long distances. Your missionary hosts and trip leaders will not be able to help you with carrying your luggage.

2. FOLLOW THE LUGGAGE REQUIREMENTS FOR YOUR AIRLINE.

Please check your airline's website for regulations on all checked and carry-on luggage. This is information that only your airline and travel agent are able to provide. Special note: If you are changing planes or using partnering airlines, be sure that the requirements are valid for all legs of your trip. Many smaller planes have tighter requirements for luggage.

3. USE ZIP-LOCK BAGS.

Packing in zip-locks is a win-win situation. It keeps spills from leaking onto your clothes and can prove useful during your trip.

4. THE TRIP LEADER WILL NEED TO PACK A FEW EXTRA THINGS.

Each of your team members will receive a comprehensive packing list from the Site Handbook. As the leader you have the responsibility of packing those items that the whole team might use or those extra safety items that everyone does not need to bring. Some of the things we recommend you consider packing as the leader:

- Copies of everyone's passports, emergency forms, and Yellow Fever vaccinations (if applicable)
- Insurance cards
- First-aid kit (including Benadryl, cold medicine)
- Missionary gifts
- Worship booklets with lyrics to songs (if applicable)
- Zip-lock bags
- Team snacks – Gum, Twizzlers, Hershey's Mini's, Trail Mix etc.
- Any supplies you need for debriefs and team devotions



Packing Tips (continued)

POTENTIAL ITEMS (ASK FIRST)

Bedding
Musical instruments
Rain gear
Insect repellent

DO NOT BRING

Expensive jewelry
Valuables that are irreplaceable
Traveler's checks
Anything that would jeopardize security
(If serving in a creative access area -
Christian or 'missions' items)

GIFTS FOR YOUR MISSIONARIES

Bringing a few small items that can be given to your new friends, host family, or interpreters are a good idea. Things like souvenirs from your home town, baseball caps, post-cards, stamps, candies, t-shirts, bookmarks, US coins, magnets are good ideas

Before you leave make sure you ask the overseas team what you would like to bring them. Here are a few gift ideas: Anything that smells good (candles, etc.) Treats from the U.S. (Reeses, coffee etc.) News from home (like the most current TIME magazine)

Bring a packet of blank cards so you can write lots of thank you notes.

THOUGHTS ON PACKING CLOTHING

These are general guidelines. Please follow any instructions given to you by your overseas team. What you wear communicates nonverbally to the local people around you. Dress for success Look sharp, especially if teaching or performing. No torn clothing.

Dress very conservatively. No skin showing anywhere between your shoulders and knees. Try the "wave your arms above your head" test before you pack it. If you have a chance to go swimming, only wear a one piece and preferably still wear a shirt over.

Body piercing, tattoos, facial hair, or long hair for men may be offensive. Consult your field worker to find if these need to be addressed in advance.

You may have the opportunity to buy clothes in country for a reasonable price. That can be a fun cultural experience. It generally helps you blend in better too.

Pack light cotton or nylon clothing that dries quickly; jeans are bulky to pack and dry slowly.



Packing List

GENERAL PACKING LIST:

Flashlight	Soap
Watch	Deodorant
Zip-lock bags	Shaving supplies
Reusable water bottle	Flashlight
Jacket	Sunglasses
Comfortable clothes	Hand sanitizer
Dress clothes	Imodium AB
Swimsuit (one piece)	Pepto Bismol
Underwear	Pain reliever
Socks	Bug spray
Shoes (1-3 pairs)	Bible
Shower Sandals	Journal, pen
Towel	Alarm clock
Toiletries	Vitamins
Toothbrush, toothpaste	Photos of family, friends
Shampoo, conditioner	

PACK IN CARRY-ON BAG:

Passport	One change of clothes
Passport copy	Camera
Passport photo	Prescription medications
Shot records	Snacks
Insurance information	Jacket or sweatshirt
Emergency numbers	Glasses (if applicable)
Cash (newer bills)	Eye mask/ear plugs

*Location-specific packing lists for your ministry location can be found in the Site Handbook.



Praying for Your Team

Choose one or two days during your trip to ask each person how he or she is doing and how you can pray. Privately pray for them right there. This can occur during normal work and ministry time. If you have a co-leader of the opposite gender, split the men and women up between you.

Pray for your teammates during your own time alone with God. Tell them they can always pull you aside to pray with them. If you sense that a team member needs extra prayer, either from you or from the team, do not hesitate to offer this. It could be just what that individual needs.

Give team members a chance to share their highs and lows from the day. Encourage them to be vulnerable, and that anything they share will be confidential. Ask specific questions about the day's events as they relate their growth journey. Listen carefully! Do not feel the need to interject your thoughts after everyone's comments. Let team members talk and relate to one other. Shepherd a teachable moment when a team member shares something that opens up a door for the whole team to grow and learn. Affirm—Take time to encourage each other.

ASK:

How have you seen Jesus in your teammates today?

Did they take a step of faith?

Did they go out of their way to serve?

Did they encourage you with something?

Did you see the fruit of the Spirit working in their life?

Did they grow in a new way?

Did they sacrifice something for you or another teammate?

Be specific, and ask team members to encourage their teammates, face to face, with how they noticed God using them. Have team members talk **TO** the person they are affirming, and not **ABOUT** them. Use “you” statements, not “he/she” statements.

Keep affirmations specific, short, and meaningful. Not everyone needs to be affirmed each night. This is not a competition to see who gets the most affirmation. This is all about how Jesus is working through each of you.



Buying Airline Tickets

Envision (and the C&MA) have been working with Raptim Travel for 20+ years. Raptim Humanitarian Travel provides travel support for those serving worldwide, and has for over 66 years. They partner with over 50 worldwide airlines to offer needed benefits. These benefits include (depending on the airline):

- Discounted fares
- Additional luggage allowances
- Relaxed restrictions/refunds/itinerary changes
- Extended booking window

Raptim Humanitarian Travel supplements these airline agreements with international expertise and a variety of extra services to serve those who serve the world.

- Free quotes
- Group specialists
- 24/7 emergency service
- Visa/passport assistance
- Destination information and travel alerts

To get a quote on your trip, group or individual, please contact your Raptim Humanitarian Travel expert. Email serveteam2.us@raptim.org or call 844-882-3233.



Recommended Tool: ACE Travel App

This tool comes to us through our insurance provider, Brotherhood Mutual. Set up an account for your trip using our policy number and your travel dates and destination, and get updates and important travel information delivered to your inbox!

To register, go to www.acetravelapp.com. Use the Envision policy number (request from the Trips Coordinator) to create a personal profile. After this, you will be able to:

- Research the country to which you are traveling:
 - Immunization requirements
 - Embassy locations
 - Visa & passport requirements
 - Culture and etiquette
 - Country information
 - Crime and country risk levels
- Create your own itinerary and receive travel alerts for any reports of political instability, union strikes and service disruption, natural disasters and weather, and crime, terrorism or disease outbreaks.



Paperwork

REQUIRED FORMS

All forms required for participants will be completed by the participant at the time of registration. If for some reason these forms are incomplete, these will appear in your account under “Manage Roster.” These include Terms & Conditions and a medical form for each individual.

FOR TEAM LEADERS

Background Checks: You are responsible for running a background check on each of your team members over the age of 18. If needed, we recommend using Protect My Ministry. Please include a National Criminal check and a National Sex Offender check. We do not need the completed background checks, just to know that these have been completed (see Team Leader Checklist below).

Child Safety Video: You will receive a link to this video in your welcome email. Please schedule a time with your team to watch this video together, and make space for questions afterwards. Please note that the video contains some sensitive material, so consider screening the video before watching it with your team.

Brotherhood Mutual Insurance: Please be sure to share this information with all team members, including printing insurance cards for each member to carry with them for the duration of the trip.

Team Leader Checklist: After making sure that all of your criteria are complete, please scan and email your completed Team Leader Checklist to our Trips Coordinator.

Visas and Passports: Depending on which Envision site your team is visiting, you may need a visa or passport for entry. Please use the website <http://www.traveldocs.com> to learn what kind of documents you might need. They also offer services for getting a visa, as well as expediting a passport.



Cross Cultural Sensitivity

Being an effective cross-cultural learner is not easy.

Often times we hold false expectations and hidden assumptions about how things should ‘work’ – from what relationships should look like, how time should be spent, what importance should be placed on tasks, how conflict should happen, etc.

It’s easy to assume that one’s own cultural way of doing things is right or best, or even more biblical than others. The tension in short-term missions lies in the relationship of discerning between the absolutes of Scripture and the nuances of cultural differences.

As you go on your trip, would you consider asking yourself questions like the following:

1. What are my underlying cultural assumptions about relationships? Leadership? Tasks? Time?
2. What are the underlying assumptions of the people to whom I am ministering and ministering alongside?
3. What are Scriptural truths that can guide our interactions? When does the Bible allow for flexibility in how we operate within cultures?

The following are a list of terms that may help you to define and recognize different cultural values during your time at our Envision site. Keep in mind that one posture is not ‘better’ than the other, as each can be and have been supported by Scripture. Paul himself said, “I have become all things to all people, that by all possible means I might save some.” Consider how you too might adopt these cultural postures during your time on the field, and being open to learning from your host culture.



Cross Cultural Terms & Definitions

HIGH POWER DISTANCE

Cultures who have a high power distance are okay with a large status gap between those who have power and those who don't. The gap is seen as natural and good, and the leader has a right to make unilateral decisions that are obeyed without question. Leaders often have special privileges. Challenging leadership directly is disrespectful and can bring shame. Group harmony is very important.

LOW POWER DISTANCE

Cultures who have a low power distance seek to minimize status symbols and inequalities. Power is often delegated to team members or subcommittees. There is a democratic decision-making style.

HIGH CONTEXT

Cultures who value high context communicate in such a way that very little information is transmitted verbally; the actual message is in the physical context or in nonverbal cues. Use of flowery language, body language is common. Value is placed on harmonious relationships and the group. Time is measured by quality, not quantity. Ambiguity is okay and expected. The present is the most important.

LOW CONTEXT

Cultures who value low context communicate very directly and clearly about ideas. What is said is most important and is often done using precise words. Accomplishing goals is more important than building relationships. Time is measured by quantity. Individualism and competition are valued as opposed to group harmony. Ambiguity causes stress and is minimized as much as possible by planning and scheduling.

COLLECTIVIST

Cultures who are collectivist see the group as the end, and improvements to individuals within the group are a means to the end, to benefit the group. The desires of the group are more important than the desires of the individual. Relationships are important.

INDIVIDUALIST

Cultures who are individualist see the individual as the end, and improvements to communal arrangements are a means to achieve this. Desires of the individual are most important.



Sample Budget

This is a sample budget. The budget below is for a team of 10 going to the Dominican Republic.

DESCRIPTION	\$ PER PERSON	# OF TEAM MEMBERS	TOTAL
Airfare/luggage	\$1,000	10	\$10,000
Passport	\$150	5	\$750
Envision Registration	\$700	10	\$6,800
Stateside transportation	\$15	10	\$150
Team meal in country	\$15	10	\$150
Ministry resources	\$40	10	\$400
Gifts for missionaries	\$7.50	10	\$75
Emergency medical care	\$10	10	\$100
Meeting drinks and snacks	\$5	10	\$50
T-shirts	\$12	10	\$120
Workbooks and journals	\$10	10	\$100
Final meeting dinner	\$5	10	\$50
Miscellaneous	\$10	10	\$100
Visa cost	\$10	10	\$100
Leader cost	\$200	10	\$2,000
TOTAL COST	\$2,169.50		\$20,270



TEAM MEMBER APPLICATION

Name: _____

**Please write your name as it appears on your passport*

Address: _____

Phone: (____) ____ - ____

Gender (circle one): Male Female

Email Address: _____

Date of Birth: __/__/__ (mo/day/year)

T-shirt size (circle one): S M L XL XXL XXXL

Please check one of the following statements:

I have never been on a cross cultural missions trip

I have been on a previous missions trip with this church to _____ (country) in _____ (year)

I have been on a cross culutral missions trip with another church/organization

Who did you go with? _____

What types of things did you do on your trip? _____

What languages do you speak besides English and how fluently? _____

To which trip are you applying? _____

Why do you want to go on this trip?

How would you describe your current relationship with Christ?

What talents/gifts has God given you to minister to others? (Drama, singing, teaching, youth, etc.)

What are your strengths and challenges in the areas of personal relationships and meeting new people?



TEAM MEMBER APPLICATION (page 2)

What do you expect to learn on this trip? How do you hope to be changed?

PASSPORT INFORMATION

If you are applying to go overseas and do not already have a passport, apply immediately for one. The process can take several weeks. (Passports are not required for Stateside trips.)

Your name EXACTLY as it appears on your passport _____

Passport # _____ Issue date _____

Expiration date _____ Birthplace _____

Agency issuing passport _____

If you do not yet have a passport, please check here: ____

CHURCH INVOLVEMENT

Have you committed to church membership? (circle one) Yes No I plan to before the trip!

Are you committed to other church programs? (circle one) Yes No I plan to before the trip!
(Sunday school, small groups, etc.)

Are you currently serving in a ministry? (circle one) Yes No I plan to before the trip!

If 'no' please explain:

Additional comments:

REFERENCES

Name _____ Phone # _____

Relationship to you _____

Name _____ Phone # _____

Relationship to you _____

Name _____ Phone # _____

Relationship to you _____

HEALTH INFORMATION

Present health condition (circle one): Excellent Good Fair Poor

Explain, if needed: _____

Guidelines for Short-Term Missions

These are some example guidelines that you may wish to adapt as you prepare your team. Feel free to use these at your discretion.

FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Individuals who feel called by God to participate in a short-term mission trip are responsible for raising the necessary funds to cover expenses for their own missions trip. When you make a deposit on a trip, or when you begin to receive support, accounting will begin to track your contributions. You and others may make periodic contributions at any time. Checks for missions trips should be made out to (your church name). Please be aware that any excess contributions or funds will be pooled and applied to other missions team expenses, or to other areas of need for your missions trip. Excess funds may not be refunded or re-designated by you for other purposes within the church.

POLICIES AND GUIDELINES FOR RAISING SUPPORT

1. Even more important than raising financial support is raising a personal prayer team. Each team member is asked to recruit five individuals who will pray for you personally and your team while you are preparing to go, while you are there, and when you return from your trip. Begin recruiting these people right away so they can be praying for you as you raise funds and complete other trip preparations. From time to time, your trip leader will provide you with information and requests to share with your prayer team.
2. Participants are encouraged to write a support letter, though this is not required. A sample letter example will be given to you to use. This letter should be sent to family and friends and should be sent as soon as you know you have been accepted by the team. This will allow you to raise awareness for your trip, recruit prayer and financial support, and give others the opportunity to join you in understanding how God is working around the world.

Important Note: All letters written to solicit financial support for short-term trips must contain the following statement:

“Contributions to short-term mission trips are tax deductible; however, in accordance with IRS regulations, these designated offerings are subject to the governing board’s control and discretion. When contributions for a particular individual exceed trip expenses, the governing board may redirect contributions to other mission team expenses or to another activity within the missions department.”

Guidelines for Short-Term Missions

(continued)

POLICIES AND GUIDELINES FOR RAISING SUPPORT (CONTINUED)

3. Participants should look for a variety of ways to add to their account balances. How each individual does this will depend on age, job status, etc. You may consider regularly contributing part of your allowance, or asking for monetary birthday gifts for your trip (if the giver wants tax credit, he/she should make checks payable to the church, not you). Contributing from your savings, taking on a part-time job or a variety of small jobs, and designating a portion of your income tax refund are other possibilities. Ask God for creative ways to add to your account.

4. The following is a sample schedule of payment dates and reimbursement guidelines:

DUE DATE	PAYMENT	FINANCIAL COMMITMENT
With Application	Deposit	\$100.00
95 Days Prior to Leave Date	Payment #1	1/3 of Total Trip Cost
65 Days Prior to Leave Date	Payment #2	1/3 of Total Trip Cost
35 Days Prior to Leave Date	Payment #3	1/3 of Total Trip Cost

ATTENDANCE RESPONSIBILITIES

Training for a missions trip and getting to know your team is a vital part of your overall missions trip experience. Therefore, we place a very high value on attendance at each team meeting. You are required to be at all missions trip training meetings. Dates have been listed for you on the interest meeting handout. You will also receive the list of dates at your first meeting. If you are unable to attend a team meeting, you must let your team leader know one week in advance that you will be absent. If you know in advance that you are going to miss two or more training meetings, we would like to meet with you to discuss if this is your best year to go on a short-term mission trip.

If you have any questions about financial or attendance responsibilities for short-term missions trips, please contact _____ .



Sample Team Covenant

I WILL PROTECT THE UNITY OF MY TEAM

By acting in love toward other team members

By refusing to gossip

By submitting to leadership

By reconciling conflict

By keeping anything that is shared strictly confidential

(Romans 15:19, Romans 15:5, 1 Peter 1:22, Ephesians 4:29, Hebrews 13:17)

I WILL BUILD THE CHARACTER OF MY TEAM

By attending team meetings faithfully

By being prepared for team meetings

By actively participating in the meetings and being willing to grow together as a team

By being financially responsible for the cost of my trip

By living a godly life and doing my best to make God's choices for my life

By giving other team members permission to hold me accountable to goals I set for myself

(Hebrews 10:25, Philippians 1:27)

I WILL SERVE THE MINISTRY OF MY TEAM

By using my gifts and talents

By being equipped to serve

By developing a servant's heart

By sharing responsibilities

(1 Peter 4:10, Ephesians 4:11–12, Philippians 2:3–4)

As a mission team participant, I will do my best, with God's help, to honor this covenant.

Signature

Printed Name

Date



Support Letter Guidelines

You're going on a missions trip! Not only are YOU pumped, but your friends and family will be very excited to hear about your venture, too. They will be thrilled to hear from you, and a letter is a great way to let them know all the details. Below are some guidelines for writing your support letter.

NEVER WRITE MORE THAN ONE PAGE. The shorter your letter, the better!

Always start with a warm “hello” so that your friends and family know immediately who the letter is from. Feel free to take one sentence (no more than two!) to bring everyone “up to speed” on what's been going on in your life. This is very helpful for those people who have had no contact for a while. Then dive in! Be sure to let them know all of the details about your trip this summer:

- Where you are going
- When you are traveling
- Include the name of the mission agency sending you, and mention your church
- Include the types of ministry you will be doing (refer to interest meeting handout for ideas)
- MOST IMPORTANTLY, explain why you want to go on this missions trip
- Tell them that the most important way that they can “team” with you is by praying for you and list one or two specific prayer requests

When writing about your financial support, be as specific as possible:

- Include the total cost of your trip
- Tell them that they can support you by sending contributions to you made out to your church
- Contributions should be sent to YOUR address—and then give them your address
- All gifts made out to your church are tax-deductible
- Any gifts exceeding the total for your trip will be donated to othes still in need of funding
- Thank them for considering becoming a part of your support team

ALWAYS sign each letter personally and take a moment to write a special note that's just to them
You may include a self-addressed envelope (not stamped) with your letter

Include a **CURRENT PICTURE** of yourself in your letter. Try to also include a picture of the people you will be serving. Everyone loves pictures, and it will add character to your letter. Make your letter as exciting and sincere as possible.



Sample Support Letter

Dear _____,

Hi there, it's Mel! I'm so excited to be writing to you today because I have a very exciting opportunity coming up that I can't wait to tell you about! I am still working part-time at Daybreak Church as the Director of Missions, and John and I love working with the high school students here.

This summer I will be making my first-ever missions trip to Asia with a small team of adults from Daybreak. I will be traveling to Cambodia with Envision (a ministry of the C&MA, my church's denomination). From June 25–July 9, our team will be partnering with a church in Phnom Penh to host an English camp for Cambodian students trying to learn conversational English. I will be a small group leader for a group of students who can practice their English skills on me! This will be perfect for me, as you know how much I like to talk! The church in Phnom Penh uses this as a means of serving the community, offering affordable classes to people who desperately want to learn English. They need us to fulfill this ministry in their community, and I am honored to be able to partner with them!

Would you consider teaming with me in my trip to Cambodia? I need people who will commit to praying for me daily. Pray that God will prepare me well, that He will protect me, give me patience and wisdom as I help to lead the English camp, and that ultimately my life will be forever changed through my experiences in Phnom Penh. You can also choose to partner with me by contributing to the cost of my trip. The total cost is \$2300; this includes airfare, lodging, food, training materials, and ground transportation. You can give toward my trip by sending a contribution, made out to Daybreak Church, to my home address: [include home address here].

IMPORTANT: Please do not mark anything in the memo line—leave it blank. [Contributions to short-term mission trips are tax-deductible; however, in accordance with IRS regulations, these designated offerings are subject to the governing board's control and discretion. When contributions for a particular individual exceed trip expenses, the governing board may redirect contributions to other mission team expenses or to another activity within the missions department.]

Thank you for taking the time to read up on my life and to hear about my next step in missions. I am honored that you would consider partnering with me on this journey half-way across the world!

(Signature and contact info)



Team Building Activities

Team builders are a significant part of training meetings. Please do not sacrifice these. Teambuilding is one of the most important things that you will do together. Below are a couple of suggested types of activities to do with your team during your team meetings.

GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER ACTIVITIES

These kinds of activities are intended to help your teammates continue to get to know each other during training meetings. Please set a time on these activities in your meetings, and find activities appropriate for where you're at in preparation for your trip (just starting vs. right before you leave.) Be sure to choose the activity you are going to do prior to each meeting so that you are able to come prepared with any necessary materials. We have found that the closer to your trip you get, the less you will need these activities. However, even if the whole team already "knows" each other, do not pass these up! You may think you know each other, but there is always room to grow.

TEAMBUILDING ACTIVITIES

Team-building activities are intended for you to use so that your teammates learn how to problem-solve together. In the process, you will discover each other's gifts, personalities, strengths, and even frustrations. Please set a time on these activities in your meetings. Some are best for one of your first training meetings, and others will fit best as your trip nears. Be sure to choose which activity you are going to do, prior to each meeting so that you are able to come prepared with any necessary materials.



Let the Nations Be Glad

John Piper

Missions is not the ultimate goal of the Church. Worship is. Missions exists because worship doesn't. Worship is ultimate, not missions, because God is ultimate, not man. When this age is over, and the countless millions of the redeemed fall on their faces before the throne of God, missions will be no more. It is a temporary necessity. But worship abides forever.

Worship, therefore, is the fuel and goal of missions. It's the goal of missions because in missions we simply aim to bring the nations into the white hot enjoyment of God's glory. The goal of missions is the gladness of the peoples in the greatness of God... But worship is also the fuel of missions. Passion for God in worship precedes the offer of God in preaching. You can't commend what you don't cherish...

Missions begins and ends in worship. If the pursuit of God's glory is not ordered above the pursuit of man's good in the affections of the heart and the priorities of the church, man will not be well served and God will not be duly honored. I am not pleading for a diminishing of missions but for a magnifying of God.

When the flame of worship burns with the heat of God's true worth, the light of missions will shine to the darkest peoples on earth. And I long for that day to come! Where passion for God is weak, zeal for missions will be weak. Churches that are not centered on the exaltation of the majesty and beauty of God will scarcely kindle a fervent desire to "declare his glory among the nations" (Ps 96:3).

1. How is "worship" the main goal of "missions"?
2. Why does our worship need to come before our mission?
3. What happens when we make people the focus of missions instead of God?
4. What does a true understanding of "the glory of God" have to do with our passion for missions?



Do's & Don'ts for Communication

DO CHOOSE ONE TEAM LEADER to be the main communicator with the field. They get so many emails that they wouldn't be able to keep up with more than one person.

DO WRITE ONLY ONE EMAIL PER WEEK and limit your questions per email. You may write more often if they need a response, but be sensitive of their time.

DO READ ALL DOCUMENTS THOROUGHLY that you receive from them. You'll find that many of your questions are answered in there. Before you ask make sure they haven't already answered it.

DO COPY YOUR LEADERS ON EMAILS to the site that include important information and details.

DO SIGN UP FOR NEWSLETTERS and prayer updates from your site and forward these on to your team members or read them at your team meetings and pray over their requests. Also find them on Facebook or their blogs to follow them and keep up to date!

DO CONNECT ON SKYPE and try to have several 'face to face' talks between now and your trip.

DO SHARE YOUR HOPES & DREAMS for the trip, but remember to hold these loosely. Your team is there to serve, not to meet your own desires, even if they are good ones.

DON'T ask for too many details too quickly. They will probably not know your agenda until a week before you arrive, and even then it might change! You don't need to worry yet about what to pack, what food you'll eat, where you'll stay...be patient. Practice being flexible now and not needing to know every detail. Good preparation for the field and for leading your team!

DON'T use Facebook for communicating information about the trip. Please only use email to discuss travel, ministry, trip logistics. Use Facebook for casual conversation, encouragement, and prayer - not work!

DON'T be discouraged if they aren't in frequent communication with you. They lead very busy lives and we want to bless them, not to burden them.

DON'T be careless with your words if you're traveling to a site in a creative access country. For security reasons, never use words like missions, church, evangelism, Jesus, missionary, Bible, prayer, etc. and don't mention any political or religious situations in their country. When in doubt, please ask!

Doing Missions When Living is Gain

By Travis Myers

Doing missions when dying is gain is the greatest life in the world.

I agree. As a staff member at Desiring God fifteen years ago, I was thrilled to help hand out and ship out hundreds of cassette tapes and CDs containing John Piper's iconic 1996 sermon, "Doing Missions When Dying Is Gain."

In the past decade, I've interacted with college students for whom, like me, that sermon was significant. These young people are keenly aware that the glory of God is infinitely valuable, they believe in the logic of not wasting their life, and they feel compelled to "do missions" in the hardest places on earth. I've heard many "young, restless, Reformed" brothers and sisters say that they are ready and willing to die for the global cause of Christ. It's remarkable.

I am concerned, however, that some of them, by nature of being young, inexperienced, and immature, have a romanticized view of suffering, martyrdom, and missions.

THE MOST FRUITFUL MISSIONARIES

A kind of zeal without wisdom will actually backfire on the mission field. I have learned from serving cross-culturally myself and from listening to many of Bethlehem's "global partners" (i.e. missionaries) that those who thrive and tend to be most fruitful are the ones who pursue faithfulness in all areas of life rather than focus on merely being radical in ministry.

They have a realistic understanding of their limitations and wisely accommodate them in various ways. They have realized that suffering, though used by God to sanctify us and at times reveal to unbelievers the surpassing value of Christ, is often a hindrance to ministry and a distraction that keeps better discipleship from happening among converts. Suffering is easier in theory than it is in practice. Our seasoned missionaries know that God is patient and that fruitful church planting and development usually takes decades. Seven to ten years might pass with no converts. Longevity is a critical asset.

FAR BETTER FOR THEM

A passion for God's glory and the cognition of how God uses suffering in his global cause are wonderful gifts of grace, but I dare to say that martyrdom can be an idealized aspiration of the young, naive, and zealous who have not yet lived long enough to have really suffered and loved others much. There is a sweet and poignant awareness of God's strength and grace to be had through our extended experiences of weakness and the ongoing felt sense of our fragility that most of the young and strong have yet to taste.

Paul's "filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions" (Colossians 1:24) took time. He survived persecu-

tions and lived long enough to “bear the marks of Christ in his body” (2 Corinthians 4:10; Galatians 6:17). He aimed to comfort other Christians in their afflictions with the comfort he had received from God in the midst of his own suffering (2 Corinthians 1:3–4).

Paul concluded during his imprisonment that, for the sake of love, he would choose to remain living, rather than die and be with Christ — though the latter was “far better” for him — so that he might continue laboring in ministry for the “progress and joy in the faith” of the churches (Philippians 1:23–25). Getting oneself killed in a dangerous place, or letting go of life when one is at death’s doorstep, can be relatively easy for the one dying, but yields much pain and grief for his or her family and friends. Fighting perfectionistic tendencies for a biblically balanced way of life, not growing weary in doing good to others, and maintaining a consistent witness to the same unbelievers over time can be extremely difficult. Yet the latter is also a wonderful experience of the kind of relationships for which we are created and recreated by our triune God.

DIE TO YOURSELF

Allow me some words of counsel to young adults who sense a calling to missions and speak easily of martyrdom. My aim is to help prepare you for a ministry that will magnify the grace and glory of God in Christ and may be used by the Spirit to extend the church to another place and people group:

First, live (and die) for Jesus by dying daily to yourself. To live cross-culturally for an extended amount of time is a tremendous opportunity for death to self. Being able to “live on the terms of others” is essential for doing cross-cultural ministry with humility and in a way that will be understood, appreciated, and fruitful.

In preparation for your future cross-cultural ministry in missions, look for ways now to put the interests of others ahead of your own. Embrace even the most mundane ways to serve — like putting away folding chairs or doing the dishes. Spend time with “the least of these,” and get familiar with the unpleasant particularities of poverty, disability, weakness (including old age), and social marginality. Pursue as many cross-cultural immersion experiences as possible — including nursing homes and hospitals. Open your heart to people not like you who will occasionally break your heart by their knuckle-headed decisions, but from whom you won’t want to be separated by death, either theirs or yours.

WE NEVER GO ALONE

Also, don’t imagine martyrdom or “life on the field” in individualistic terms. Missionaries are merely disciples like the rest of us. According to the Scriptures, killing sin, delighting in God, and developing a winsome witness with unbelievers is a corporate pursuit. It is unbiblical for single persons or married couples to do pioneer church planting (or any kind of ministry) alone. Missionaries need all the means of grace and kinds of care that all Christians require and that we experience primarily by way of regular fellowship with other believers.

Missionaries often need counseling when discouraged or confused, and a rebuke for sin at times. They may

need to be held accountable to do language-learning work or to be seeking out relationships with local people. Imagine missions in terms of both converts and teammates who will benefit from you being around.

AIM TO BLESS, NOT DIE

During the first few centuries of the church, it seems that most pastors and other theologians discouraged Christians from “volunteering” for martyrdom, perceiving it as something presumptuous. In fact, if you succeed in getting yourself killed without consideration of how to help others and without compassion for them, you will profit nothing by it (1 Corinthians 13:3). Instead, pursue holistic faithfulness to God in honoring parents, loving a spouse, providing for and instructing children, serving neighbors, and contributing as a fellow church member.

Ask yourself, Does my ambition include the goal of “living a quiet life” so that I may “win the respect” of unbelievers with whom I share some modicum of existence in a particular society (1 Thessalonians 4:11–12)?

MISSIONS AND MIXED MOTIVES

Finally, if and when God convicts you of any mixed motives for doing missions generally, or for martyrdom in particular, remind yourself of these three truths:

All believers struggle with a heart divided, especially, perhaps, those in full-time ministry.

The subtle presence of immature or ulterior motives does not nullify the presence of good, biblical motives that are magnificently in your heart by the grace of God.

You can rest your repentant soul in the good news that Christ died to pay for all your sin, was raised for your justification, and reigns over his precious church to oh-so-gradually conform the citizens of his kingdom to his own righteous character — including purity, zeal, love, patience, kindness, wisdom, and humility.

God will give us the joy and privilege of being his vehicle of blessing to the nations as a part of the Seed of Abraham (Galatians 3:13–29) as we walk along the way of a holistically faithful life strategically placed on this Rock for his glory (Matthew 7:24–27; 16:13–20; 28:18–20).

Taken from desiringgod.org



Avoiding the Ugly American Stereotype

By Drew Sams, 2006

It was a beautiful summer day, and the crowds were meandering along Grafton Street to the melodies of a busking trio set up in front of a statue of Molly Malone. The trio, comprised of two violinists and a cellist, were performing “Pachelbel’s Canon in D major” to perfection. As the crowd gathered in appreciation around the red-headed sisters in flowing white dresses, an incident occurred that was tantamount to crashing cymbals during a violin solo. A tourist, apparently walking toward a destination he could not find and oblivious to his surroundings, passed right in front of the musicians with an unfurled map in one hand and a cell phone in the other, yelling, “What’s that? I can’t hear you! Let me get past this noise!”

I cringed, thinking it couldn’t get any worse, until a young boy in front of me tugged on his father’s arm and asked in a distinctive Irish accent, “That was an American, wasn’t it Dad?” My heart sank. Grafton Street in Dublin, Ireland is known for many things: beautiful architecture, pedestrian-only streets, great shopping, and famous musicians who got their start performing there. However, like many other beautiful locations, it’s also known for tourists who don’t know better.

On that day, the beautiful scene was momentarily marred by an “ugly American.” You know the stereotype: ignorant, sloppy, loud, obnoxious, and arrogant. The term was coined in a 1958 book by the same name, and it has stuck ever since. At the time this incident occurred, I was serving alongside Habit for Humanity in Ireland as a short term mission’s leader, and in that moment, I was embarrassed to be an American.

When we travel, we are, in a sense, ambassadors of our own country, and our behavior shapes observers’ perspectives of where we come from. For those who are followers of Christ, Paul reminds us in his letter to the Corinthian church that we are also ambassadors for Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20). Since we’re called to represent Jesus, since our citizenship in heaven trumps our citizenship here on earth, we have a high standard to live up to. Though the following tips appear to focus more on our earthly citizenship, they will enable us to enter more fully into other cultures so that we might better share the Good News of Jesus through our lips and our lives.

If you are about to visit another culture, these five tips will temper the “ugly American” stereotypes mentioned above so that you and your team can be more effective witnesses to the redeeming love of Jesus.

LEARN BEFORE YOU LEAP (OR YOU'LL FALL)

Giving the “thumbs up” is fine and dandy in the West, but is considered extremely offensive in Iran. Eating with your left hand is considered an ambidextrous skill in my home, but would be revolting to many in Africa. Serving finger foods at a party is what good hosts do in the States, but would create an awkward situation for many Bolivians, since they rarely eat food with their hands. Each of these is considered a faux-pas (literally meaning “false step” in French) and has the potential of causing you (and your mission) to stumble. Don’t let months of preparation and team training be undermined by a cultural faux-pas that could have easily been researched prior to arrival. While you can search faux pas on wikipedia.com and find etiquette for most countries around the world, it would be ideal to have a conversation with your on-site mission partner to learn local customs and etiquette and include it in your team trainings before you arrive.

DRESS UP (LIKE ITS EASTER SUNDAY)

Americans take pride in dressing casually. Sweatpants, baseball caps, flip-flops, and T-shirts are all familiar words in our lexicon. But in many places around the world our knack for the casual is frowned upon. One person I sat next to on a flight to England said, “When I visit the States, I see Americans dress nicely, so why do they look like they just rolled out of bed when they travel internationally?” Ouch.

I know that this goes against the practice of many youth pastors, but please don’t make “Team Africa” T-shirts for your team to wear on the plane. Yes, matching T-shirts are easier for you to spot, but there are better ways to create unity among the group, ones that won’t perpetuate the stereotype that Americans are sloppy. Most cultures around the world wear their best while traveling, so save the sweatpants for the hotel room. What to wear? Think Easter Sunday . . . seriously. Pants and collared shirts for guys; long skirts and blouses for girls. We just took a team to East Africa with this dress code, and they survived the 36 hours of travel without wearing sweatpants and a team shirt. You can too.

SPEAK THEIR LANGUAGE (AT THEIR VOLUME)

Though many places around the world are familiar with English, people feel respected when you try to speak their language. Simple phrases like “Hello,” “What is your name?” and “Thank you” are a must when traveling to a different country. Your willingness to engage in learning someone’s language will more than make up for your lack of fluency and poor pronunciation.

The volume of your words is also essential. Though I’m still mastering this, other cultures have an amazing ability to communicate with inside voices when inside. This can be tough, especially when you have a large group. (I’m speaking from experience—having led 9 international mission trips with teenagers.) I’ve learned the hard way that airports are not the best place for Red Rover (security will be sent over), restaurants are not for card games like Slap Jack (they won’t let you come back), and stores are not the place to scream for joy when you find the perfect gift for grandma back home.

EAT THEIR FOOD (WITH A SMILE)

This can be tough for many, especially when you are traveling to remote places. While staying with the Cabecar tribe in the jungles of Costa Rica, our team ate roasted pig for 4 days straight. It sounded exotic, until we found out that they didn't have refrigerators and re-cooked the maggots off each day. Though we were tempted to say we were vegetarians and just eat the rice, our indigent missionary partner explained, "Killing the one pig they own and presenting it to you is the most generous gift offering this tribe can afford. If you were to refuse it, we would have to leave." Food etiquette needs to be researched before visiting a region. While it would be considered rude to not finish the entire plate of rice and pig in Costa Rica, actually finishing your food in some parts of Asia communicates the opposite message—that the host did not offer you enough. You'll never know unless you do your homework.

BE HUMBLE (BECAUSE YOUR COUNTRY ISN'T BETTER THAN THEIRS)

When you're tired and out of your comfort zone, it is easy to get frustrated by driving etiquette in Nairobi, the trash on the streets in Buenos Aires, and the lack of hot water (let alone water) wherever you are staying. It is human nature to believe that we do things better than other people, and this belief is magnified when you visit other cultures. We have opinions on everything—what good coffee tastes like, what the essentials of a bathroom are, and how we should be treated when we are a customer.

It is at this point that you have a choice. You can focus on your belief that the American way of doing things is best and be very vocal about it, or you can choose to enter into another culture in the same way that Jesus became incarnate—with great humility. We sometimes forget that God left the comfort and splendor of heaven and became human, only to be mocked, tortured, and killed. Emulating Jesus' humility is not a recommendation, it is an imperative. In John 20:21, Jesus says to his disciples while they are locked behind closed doors, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you."

Let's allow ourselves to be sent the same way that Jesus was sent. Let's enter into the sometimes uncomfortable realities of others' lives with great humility. When it gets tough and when we're in those uncomfortable moments in another culture, let's remember Luke's record of Jesus' words in Acts 1:8, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Thankfully, we're not sent out alone or unequipped.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Which tip will be the easiest for you to adopt? The hardest?

What cultural faux-pas or tips for avoiding the "ugly American" stereotype have you experienced?



Voluntourism: More Harm than Good

By Heather Ruiz

In August, 2013, Heather Ruiz traveled through West Africa as a journalist for ADRA. After working in development for nine months, Ruiz moved to a village in the Western Sahara to find answers for her questions about responsible volunteering and empowering communities. The following article is her insight on constructive service.

It took me a while to find it. The taxi driver and I were shouting over each other in French about whether the orphanage was another street down or already behind us, but finally the crooked sign “Grace House” appeared in dripping, painted words. The driver lost no time in depositing me on the lonely street, and I felt more orphaned than ever before marching through the creaking gate. Dirty floors and dim lights welcomed me inside. I did my best to prepare myself for what might come next — coughing invalids or stray chickens or skeleton babies — and I nearly stepped on top of bright red Sanuks.

“Who are you?” The voice caught me first, unmistakable in her accent.

“The journalist from ADRA. I called earlier about stopping by?” I found myself looking at... well, a stereotypical American College Student in all her glory: pink tank top shouting Abercrombie like a tag line to her expressionless face; Ray-Bans slipped into a highlight-streaked ponytail; I almost expected an iced Starbucks to appear in her hand.

“Oh, I’m just here for a week before we go on the safari.” She shrugged. “I came to volunteer with a group from my university.”

I followed her through the halls and corridors to her squad in the main room, and there I found the chaos. Some children were dancing, others scaling volunteers’ laps and arms, still more were jumping in place as the uncontrollable excitement pummeled through their slender bodies.

“Green dress?” A volunteer was pulling clothing out of a cardboard box.

“Miiiiiiiine!” screeched every girl voice and, honestly, a few boy voices. They tore and clawed through the crowd, arms flailing out.

“Blue t-shirt? Yellow socks?” The voice continued.

“Hey, I have candy over here!” Another volunteer contributed. Even the walls seemed to be quivering with pleasure.

I discovered the director in the back of the room, smiling wide.

“How many volunteer groups do you get here?” I shouted over the din.

“Sometimes two a month,” he beamed proudly. “The volunteers cover almost all our staff.”

“You aren’t providing jobs for any local workers?” I repeated.

“Well, no.” He paused a moment, sensing the need to make it sound better. “We have so very many children here at Grace House. They need food and a home. They need help. Here, they get help.”

“Where do they come from before here?” I encouraged, reaching for my notepad.

“Terrible families. No food. So poor, you know.”

“Wait, they have families?”

“Half of them have families.” I was frozen for a moment, but the sad truth is such numbers are typical in African countries. After the wave of volunteers to orphanages in Ghana began to show signs of an abusive business enterprise, the Social Welfare Department organized a survey revealing that 90% of Ghanaian orphans have one or more living parent. The presence of volunteers visiting so many orphanages created “jobs” for children from families that could benefit from a few less mouths to feed.

“Some of these children have lost their parents and are emotionally susceptible at this stage,” I gently said. “Isn’t it damaging to further their never-ending cycle of abandonment from a revolving door of volunteers?”

“This is just the way it is.” The director crossed his arms. “We do this to make a difference the best we can, and you need to remember, this is for the volunteer, too. This experience is life-changing.”

I glanced at the group of college students, taking selfies with the animated children. *No doubt this will be a series of profile pictures.* For a moment, I wondered if the unidentified, romping, homeless children seemed reduced to the same status of elephants and zebras on the veld.

“So your grandfather sells shoes on the street so your sisters can eat?” I asked again to make sure I had gotten the French right.

“Yeah.” Hassan traced a stick around his bare toes. “As far back as I can remember. Can I have your watch?”

“No. I didn’t tell you that you could have it.”

“But the other volunteers give me things,” Hassan insisted. “Well I came here to play with you.” I stared back stubbornly into his grinning eyes.

“Do you have an iPod in America?”

“Yes.”

“Can I have it?” He had such lust in those small eyes.

“No, Hassan. Keep telling me your story about your grandpa.”

“When I grow up, I’m going to America, because I want to buy things like what the volunteers have.” He pointed a stubby thumb at his bare chest. “I’ll be a rich man, like in the movies.”

“Hassan, has anyone told you about Jesus when they visited?” I knelt down on his level.

“Yeah,” he shrugged. “I know about him. I pray to him when the volunteers come. Do you have Angry Birds on your iPod? The volunteers showed me that game. I know how to play that game.”

“What else do the volunteers show you?”

Hassan began to mumble, not understanding the concern on my face.

“The last volunteers gave me things,” he said hopefully.

This is the classic White Savior Complex, the worship of the land of the White Man. Somehow, despite hearing that Jesus loves him, the message of material goodness has swept him further in devotion, and he will worship the white saviors for the spectacular contributions to his development rather than the ostensible Jesus fellow. Will Hassan wake up tomorrow thinking about his grandpa, selling shoes in determination to provide and sustain, or the next group of regaling volunteers?

It became clearer to me over time that it is necessary for collegiate volunteers to re-prioritize and re-evaluate our approach to aid so that we use our resources to empower countries to develop themselves according to their own standards and not continue to hinder them with our own.

The “mission trip model“ has been praised for the individuals willing to sacrifice their time and money for impoverished communities, doing as Christ would. However, without knowledge of language, local culture, societal nuances, and the economical framework of the community, this type of “voluntourism” is sometimes wasteful at best, and possibly destructive to the community at worst.

The development industry, which previously consisted of agencies and governments giving and spending aid, is now joined by masses of enthusiastic college-aged hopefuls, wishing to change the world while knowing little to nothing about the complexities of the country. In 2010, \$211.77 billion was spent on international volunteering,² creating an industry devoted to the volunteer’s personal experience. The temptation to swoop in and fix a village’s hunger, poverty, and disease seems simple enough and personally fulfilling, but it presents Africa as “victims” and creates a feel-good spectacle for the volunteers. By sending out untrained volunteers, we are essentially saying that development work is “easy,” that our skills as middle-class twenty-somethings are so valuable that they can save a village, and that just because we are from the U.S., we are superior to the third-world countries that we aim to serve.

The complexities of Africa’s social and economic development remain unconsidered, and questions about how and why poverty exists are overshadowed by the aesthetic pleasure of the experience. After just a few months, the volunteer will come to realize their shortcomings and a part of them may give up, realizing that it’s not a simple answer. It’s time to recognize that in pursuit of a service experience, we may be salving our own consciences without fully examining the consequences of the people we seek to help. Teju Cole, a writer on the topic of responsible volunteering, tweeted: “The White Savior Complex is not about justice. It’s about having a big emotional

experience that validates privilege.”

Cole has a point. Individuals fundraise for Africa, do a little good, experience something that their affluent lives cannot offer, and return home with a full memory card and a story that places them in the ranks of the kind-hearted and worldly wise.

But can't there be more than an experience? Can't we redirect this "voluntourism" industry to be sustaining and empowering local communities, so that good intentions will carry into good outcomes? As individuals from developed Western countries, shouldn't we allow our role in international development to be defined not by our own interests but by the expressed needs of developing nations?

“Bring in the goat!” Cheikh Mohammed beckoned towards one of his wives. She returned a moment later with a blistering platter to add to the collection of feast foods. He motioned for me; we plunged our fingers into the meat. After spending nine months with ADRA, I decided to leave with my unanswered questions about responsible third-world development and take a bush taxi deep into the Saharan interior. I wanted to see a community still relatively untouched from outside aid; I wanted to know how people can withstand hardships and sustain themselves by themselves. I wanted to see inner empowerment working for myself, a community that hadn't yet been crippled into dependency.

That's how I found myself sharing dinner and conversation on the village chief's rooftop each Thursday night, overlooking a cluster of low painted tents and the gingerbread-type houses breaking up the wide expanse of desert. “Cheikh Mohammed, do your friends give you gifts?” I started in Arabic, breaking off a piece of village bread. “Of course, it's a friendly thing to do.” He adjusted his posture on the scratchy woven carpet.

“Now if I'm coming from America to give you gifts, am I your friend?”

His face darkened, and he chewed a great deal before he spoke. “Heather, a donation is a very dangerous thing to give away. Your American world is filled with so many items and material goods, that you might not understand the gravity of handing something for free to someone who has never been handed anything.”

I watched him deliberately dip his bread into goat sauce and carefully chew, knowing that he would explain himself.

“Do you know what this village means? Generations of desert wanderers, learning and toiling for their bread and meat and homes. We are proud of this; we are empowered, by this. Now, give a village man a handout? You've just weakened him. You've increased his dependency; diminished his sense of self-esteem. One of the most widely-accepted notions is that Westerners are the solution to African problems. This requires portraying us as helpless and endlessly recirculating images only of abandonment and violence, or innocence and primitivism.”

I chewed on his Arabic words while he finished his bread.

“But poverty and hunger still exist, and our morality moves us to feed and clothe,” I broke into his silence. “You asked me if my friends give me gifts,” he said. “Make sure that you are my friend.

Make certain you understand me, first. Learn my strengths, my heart, my efforts. Once we are established in brotherhood, then yes, send me a present, one that won't hurt me to open."

"You see, Heather," he set his meat down to look closely at me, "We are not weak. We are not underdeveloped. If you believe we must be helped, look more closely. We are content in our hearts, affectionate to each other, and attentive to our souls. Perhaps the greater need is for us to be helping you."

A reflex reaction to this critique may be, "At least they are doing something," or "Wow, I guess we can't really do anything," but this would be lazy thinking. It's not that our intention isn't genuine, it's that our analysis isn't. As long as the West has the kind of economic, cultural and militaristic stronghold over places like Uganda, our hard work is still not targeting the root or causes of oppression. Our main goal should be evaluating foreign policies, which we play a direct role in electing, not short-term solutions that make us feel like we "done good."

The Egyptian military receives \$1.3 billion in annual U.S. aid, and, interestingly enough, is also stomping out country's movement for democracy and killing off activists. Nigeria is one of the top five oil suppliers to the U.S, and the American government was not interested in supporting the Nigerian protests against one of the most corrupt governments. After the U.S. donated a profusion of subsidized white rice, Haitian rice farmers struggled to continue on.³ And finally Uganda, our country of interest, suffered when the Obama administration recently halted or reallocated an estimated \$9 million in aid, cancelled regional military assistance over rebel activity, and barred Ugandans involved in human rights abuses from entering the U.S.A.

Isaiah 10:1-2a: "Woe to those who decree iniquitous decrees, and the writers who keep writing oppression, to turn aside the needy from justice and to rob the poor of my people of their right..."

The greater need for involvement is where American policies are advocating for the crimes that motivated us to volunteer in the first place. This means setting aside our hero-thirsty ego and addressing with our votes the policies that shackle our foreign friends. This means accepting that our help is valuable for contributing with multi-person assistance, not just our own individual efforts.

For orphans, let's provide resources to the capable families, donate for child sponsorship and feeding programs like the one Christalis is also running, assist at-risk mothers, and re-home children or develop a family model in orphanages. Let's support vocational training and community-based initiatives. Let's talk about this White Savior Complex and how to keep it out of ministry. Let's match volunteers to their existing skill set and require them to be integrated with their host communities, learning and listening to real needs.

Let's befriend these fighters, these strong survivors, and then let's refocus aid to further empower our friends.



Things Every Team Should Know About Traveling in a Group

- 1. VISIBLE PASSPORT CHECK.** Leader: Ask to actually SEE every teammate's passport, don't assume that have it because they said they do. This should be done at every major change (arriving at the airport, getting off the plane, through customs, etc).
- 2. YOUR PASSPORT SHOULD NEVER LEAVE YOUR SIGHT.** If someone asks to take it for ANY reason, it is acceptable to ask to go with them.
- 3. BE YOUR OWN LUGGAGE SECURITY.** Don't leave your luggage unattended for any reason. Always assign at least two people to stay behind with luggage should you need to split up to buy food, use the restroom, etc.
- 4. PACK ONLY WHAT YOU CAN CARRY.** Be mindful of how long you'll be traveling and how far you might need to walk! Pack light!
- 5. STICK TOGETHER.** There is no reason to have a student be separated at any time. Use the buddy system when you do have to be separated (restrooms, purchasing food, being pulled aside, through all airport checks, etc.) It is perfectly legal to ask if you can go with a student if they are pulled aside or detained for any reason.
- 6. ENGINE AND CABOOSE.** One team leader should be at the front of every line and the other should be at the back. The front leads the way; the back looks out for any mishaps.
- 7. NOT EVERYONE IS OUT TO GET YOU.** Most airport employees are just trying to do their jobs. It is not their secret desire to take you and your team down. Be polite and give people the benefit of the doubt. Follow all instructions, even if you don't understand.
- 8. KNOW YOUR PLATFORM (STS=SHORT TRUTHFUL STATEMENT).** You should know how to answer questions like, "What are you doing here?" "What university do you attend?" "Are you a Christian?" Take time as a team to decide what the answers to each of these questions should be and make sure you are all on the same page. Consistency is key!



Things Every Team Should Know About Traveling in a Group

9. CITIZENS ARE NOT GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES. There is a difference between an immigration agent asking you questions and someone you met out in the city asking what you are doing. Keep security in the forefront of your mind, but don't feel like you have to fear the citizens of the country. They probably just want to learn more about "the Americans."

10. DO AS THE LOCALS DO! Not everything you learn about a culture is taught in a classroom or read in a book. Observe the culture around you and adapt to it. YOU are the guest so you do things their way! Are the locals chatty or quiet? Are all the women wearing long skirts or pants? Do they greet each other differently than we would?

11. TEAM ROLES. Talk about how everyone responds to stress, excitement, confusion, lots of noise, being tired or hungry. Take into consideration who can handle certain aspects of travel better and put them in charge of various things.

12. GO WITH THE FLOW. If something "goes wrong," adapt and move on!



Am I Prepared?

Preparation is a key ingredient to your having a successful and life-changing short-term missions experience. The leaders are able to help prepare you to a certain degree, but much of the preparation falls upon your shoulders! Hopefully, the following issues and questions will be ones that stimulate you to think through how prepared you are and in what areas you might need to become better prepared prior to your trip. We invite you to take a quiet time and review the landscape of your life. Reflect, journal and pray through these different areas. Remember that you don't have to be perfect: we are all in the process of being formed into the likeness of Christ!

How can you grow in the following areas?

As you come across areas in your life that need to be changed, take this as an opportunity to make growth steps as you prepare to travel. We minister to others out of what we have inside of us. Being always precedes doing! Our inner lives provide fuel for ministry!

Please see the questions on the following page as you prayerfully think about preparing for your trip!

Am I Prepared?

AM I PREPARED PHYSICALLY?

Am I in shape? What exercises could I be doing to increase my fitness level for this global project?
Am I in good health? What areas of my self-care could be improved prior to departure for this project?
Have I had a physical exam within the last year?

AM I PREPARED EMOTIONALLY?

Do I have any unresolved issues in my relationships?
Am I dealing with depression, doubt, or deep discouragement that I need to figure out prior to departure?
Would it be wise to talk anything out with a pastor, counselor or friend?
By participating in this global project, am I 'escaping' from personal problems or difficult situations?

AM I PREPARED SPIRITUALLY?

Where am I in my journey with God? Am I cultivating some spiritual disciplines (prayer, meditation, fasting, Bible study, silence, worship and solitude) on a regular basis?
Am I listening to God's Spirit and his promptings?
Am I downshifting my life enough so that there is quiet in my day to reflect on what God is teaching me?
Am I spending time reading and digesting God's word? How consistent am I?
Am I striving to be obedient in the little things? Applying what God is teaching me?
Do I have a heart that is enlarging with God's love and grace? Is it getting softer or harder?

AM I PREPARED MENTALLY?

Is my thought life honoring to God? Am I dealing with inappropriate thoughts?
Am I harboring sinful thoughts that need to be confessed to God or another person?
Are there racist thoughts about people from other cultures or different skin colors lingering in my mind?
Do I consider myself superior to other nationalities?
Is the magnitude of God's grace permeating my thinking more and more?

AM I PREPARED RELATIONALLY?

Have I thought through my responsibilities and relationships at home in reference to this global project?
I will be spending numerous hours with a team. How do I relate to others? How do I respond to authority?
Am I prone to any types of interpersonal conflict that might hinder my ability to work with others?
Do I consider myself a good listener? How can I improve on this before going with the team?
Am I comfortable being transparent and sharing my failures with others? What obstacles do I have when it comes to being open and vulnerable?
Do group discussions or decisions frustrate me?
Am I open to receiving honest feedback about how other team members perceive me?



EXPECTATIONS & REALITY

Expectations. We all have preconceived notions of what an experience will be like beforehand. When it meets or exceeds our expectations, we're happy and pleased with how things turned out. And when it fails to meet our expectations, we sometimes have a bad taste in our mouths afterwards – whether we actually pinpoint it as unmet expectations or not.

Please use this worksheet to help you begin to think through some of your expectations for your trip. We want you to be able to develop realistic expectations after some discussion and research. By the way, it's okay to say "I don't know what to expect," in the first My Expectations box. After some research, you will have some concrete expectations, so please write them in.

CATEGORY	MY EXPECTATIONS	EXPECTATIONS AFTER RESEARCH	REALITY AS I SAW IT
Living Situation			
Tasks on Trip			
Personal Hygiene			
Relationships with Locals			
Teammate Relationships			



EXPECTATIONS & REALITY

CATEGORY	MY EXPECTATIONS	EXPECTATIONS AFTER RESEARCH	REALITY AS I SAW IT
How People Worship			
Cultural Stress & My Reaction			
What Missionaries Are Like			
Relating to My Leaders			
Language Learning			
Food			

Taken from p. 56 in Cross-Cultural Expectations: Stepping Out and Fitting In Around the World by Duane Elmer, Downers Grove, IVP, 2002.



Frequently Asked Questions

WHO CAN GO ON AN ENVISION TRIP?

Envision trips are designed for people of all ages - from high schoolers to older professionals. We love taking teams of all ages! You are required to be at least 13 years of age to travel overseas.

HOW MUCH ARE TRIPS?

The cost of the trip varies from place to place. There are two costs for each trip: First, the amount paid directly to Envision. This amount can be found on the Trips page. This cost that covers your room, board, on-ground transportation (most locations), and ministry experience at each location. It also covers required international insurance (if you are taking an international trip). The second expense is your cost to travel to the location. You are responsible to purchase your own airline tickets or cover travel costs to get to the site. If you are taking an international trip, you may also have visa costs, passport costs, and departure/airport taxes to pay as well. To learn about visa requirements for your destination, please refer to the Travel Document Systems website.

WHEN SHOULD I START PLANNING MY TRIP?

Planning trips often takes longer than you think. We encourage you to contact Envision 6-12 months before your desired departure date. This will give adequate time for you to raise funds, apply for passports or visas, turn in paperwork, and get all needed immunizations.

WHAT IS THE ADULT/STUDENT RATIO FOR THESE TRIPS?

Generally speaking, we like to have minimum 5:1 ratio of the same gender student to adult.

WHAT SHOULD WE DO AFTER WE HAVE PRAYED AND DECIDED TO GO ON A TRIP?

The first thing to do is gather your group leaders together and decide on an Envision site. Fill out an inquiry form online and request your desired dates. Once your dates are cleared with the site coordinator, register your team. Then, advertise and recruit your team! When you have recruited your team, register your full group online no later than 90 days before your trip. A \$100 deposit per person is due when you register. You can make payment by credit card, ACH, or check. The balance of your trip is due 60 days before your departure date. Late payments are subject to a fee.

DO YOU RECOMMEND ANY BOOKS FOR PREP OR TRAINING?

We recommend the *Short Term Missions Workbook* by Tim Dearborn, InterVarsity Press.

WHAT ABOUT IMMUNIZATIONS? HOW DO I KNOW IF I NEED SHOTS AND WHICH ONES?

The best place to find information on immunizations is on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website. This will give you a precise health outlook on the area you are traveling to.

DO YOU HAVE A PACKING LIST? WHAT SHOULD I BRING? WHAT SHOULD I NOT BRING?

Yes. A site-specific packing list is in the Site Handbook you will receive via email after you register.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I LAND IN A COUNTRY? WHERE DO I GO FROM THERE?

When your group arrives at your destination you will first need to go through immigration and customs. You will be given a form on the airplane that each team member must fill out. You will then follow through the immigration lines. Once you make it through customs your host or someone from the Envision site will be waiting for you. They will transport you to your housing accommodations.

WHEN IS OUR REGISTRATION PAYMENT DUE?

Your initial non-refundable deposit of \$100 per person is at the time of registration. Your trip balance is due 60 days from your departure date. If you miss the deadline, your group will be charged an extra \$100. Please communicate any delays to Envision Office as soon as possible.

WHEN SHOULD WE APPLY FOR PASSPORTS?

Immediately. Some groups have a problem getting their passports in time for their trip because they waited too long to apply. As soon as you know someone is going and they don't have a passport, have them apply immediately. To start the process, go to <http://travel.state.gov/passport/>.

DO I NEED TO OBTAIN ADDITIONAL INSURANCE?

If you are taking an international trip, you will receive trip insurance from Brotherhood Mutual as part of your registration. The C&MA requires that all mission trips carry this insurance. Trip Cancellation insurance is NOT included. You would need to purchase it on your own if it is desired.

ARE THERE OTHER FORMS THAT WILL NEED TO BE COMPLETED?

Everyone will complete the necessary forms during the online registration process. If these are incomplete, they will show up under "Manage Roster" in your account. The Trip Leader is responsible for filling out the Team Leader Checklist and returning it to the Envision Office.

HOW DO I ADD, CANCEL OR REPLACE PEOPLE AFTER WE HAVE REGISTERED AS A GROUP?

If you need to cancel a trip participant, please notify the Envision Office. You can add people yourself by logging back into your online registration through the original link and adding them. For instructions on how to do this, please contact the Envision Office. If you have any problems, please call the Trips Coordinator at 719-265-2122.