RE-ENTRY INTO THE U.S.
TIPS FOR RE-ENTRY

Six months of preparation, many hard days of service and then WHAM! -- it’s over. You may be discovering that “Culture Shock” runs both ways. Reverse Culture Shock is an actual condition defined in psychological journals worldwide in many ways. Our favorite definition is, “the unexpected confrontation with the familiar. Be assured, it is normal and it is a process you will go through...whether you like it or not! Hopefully the following insights will be helpful to you as you navigate your way back “home.”

LESSON A - A BIBLICAL MODEL FOR ADJUSTING

As with most things in the Christian life, we can find a road map in scripture. Global compassion trips and debriefing are no exception. Let’s take a look at a biblical model.

In Luke 10 we find Jesus sending out a short-term mission team!

“As after this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. He told them, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road.’”

In Luke 10:17 we find the beginning of a DEBRIEFING by Jesus. It’s a model we can apply to our own project:

FIRST...“The seventy-two returned with joy and said, “Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name.”

THEY SHARED WHAT THEY SAW.

We have found a successful and amazing way to report what you saw God doing in and among His people...THREE WORDS....Select “three words” to sum up your experience overseas. Many people will ask you how your trip was, but only a fraction of those really want to take the time to sit down and hear your stories. Most are looking for a simple reply. So to avoid the discouragement that comes when someone isn’t interested in ALL your stories, we ask that you select three words. Choose them wisely and try to select words that will leave people wanting to know more. Even some of those who wanted only a short reply will be curious about your words and ask for more. Write your words here and share them with others on your team!

1. ______________________________

2. ______________________________

3. ______________________________
SECOND…“He replied, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.” THEY LEARNED THE SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THEIR MINISTRY.

Can you look deeper than the surface and discern what God may have been doing in a greater spiritual sense? In your own life? In the life of someone you touched or the churches/ministries you worked with?

THIRD…“I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you.” THEY WERE REMINDED IN WHOSE STRENGTH AND POWER THEY MINISTERED.

What were some “Yeah, God!” moments from your trip? What were some of the miracles or unexpected blessings you witnessed? Pause now and give credit where credit is due! Jesus told His disciples to take nothing for their journey. What is something that you had to learn to be completely dependent on God for during your project?

FOURTH…“However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.” THEY FOUND PERSPECTIVE FOR THEIR LIVES.

Determine how to apply the experience to your life at home. What things have you learned through this mission that you want to apply to your life here? Ministry? Personal? Lifestyle? Relationally?

NEXT…“At that time Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit, said, ‘I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children.

Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure.’” GOD WAS PRAISED FOR WHAT THEY DID.

Thank God for the opportunity to serve him. How do you feel about God having used you on this project? What have you learned about God and yourself on this journey? What would you like to thank him for?

FINALLY…”All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows who the Son is except the Father, and no one knows who the Father is except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.’ Then he turned to his disciples and said privately, “Blessed are the eyes that see what you see.” THEY WERE ENCOURAGED TO CONTINUE THEIR WORK.
LESSON B - OBSTACLES TO ADJUSTING

While not an exhaustive list, these are the five most common things people tend to deal with when they return home from the mission field. The key to working through re-entry is identifying your struggles, determining why they are a problem for you and then figuring out some things that you can do to help alleviate the obstacle – turn your negative into a positive!

**BOREDOM** - You spent months preparing for the project, raised support and then spent two weeks overseas where every day was filled with purpose and a plan, only to come home and re-engage in a routine lifestyle that sometimes seems like you’re aimlessly going through the motions.

What are the things you miss most now that the project is over?

What aspects of your “routine life” are you struggling with? Why?

What can you do to ignite a sense of “purpose” in your life? Something new? A changed perspective on something that was already a part of your life before your trip?

**ALIENATION** - The same people you thought you couldn’t wait to get away from upon your return home are now the only people who really understand what your experience was. And without your weekly training times and on-field ministry, you don’t see them that much – or when you do, other people are around that don’t want to keep hearing about your trip. So in your social circle, employment and even your family, you feel alone with your experiences, alone with your thoughts and observations – suddenly you feel like the “outsider.”

Are you struggling with this? Is there someone in particular, or a particular group, that you feel isolated from?

Besides sharing your “Three Words” and photos, is there some other way you can SHOW those around you the life change that has taken place?

Can you find time/make time to connect with other members of your team and talk about the impact of your journey?
REVERSE “HOMESICKNESS” - Just as you most likely experienced some homesickness when you left the U.S. – missing family & friends... now you find yourself thinking about the people you met, the ones you came to love, and missing them desperately.

- Who are the people you find yourself thinking about – missing today?
- How can you continue your relationship with some of these people?
- What aspects of your “host” culture are you missing?
- Are there ways to incorporate things you valued in your “host” culture into your life here at home?

CONDEMNATION - After living among people who have practically nothing and yet have found joy and fulfillment, you find yourself noticing how much wealth we throw away, how much food we leave on our plates, how much we take for granted in our church, in our homes and in our society. [Don’t judge people by the things you just learned. It is counterproductive and alienates them. The Holy Spirit is far more effective than a judging spirit. Let them see a changed life. Don’t hold others to the same standard that you now feel challenged to. They have not experienced what you have.]

- What are some “everyday things” that you can appreciate better now than before you had this experience?
- What are the things that have bothered you since your return home?
- Understanding that not everyone has had this experience, how can you express your thoughts and concerns to others without a condemning tone or air of superiority?
- Brainstorm some “creative” ways to be a part of a “Change Solution” to educate people and change things in our culture that need to be seen through the eyes of Christ.

FEAR OF REVERSION - You know that you have changed – you aren’t the same person who got on that plane. But now that you are home, the old lifestyle is calling you, the pace of life is picking up and you're longing for the simplicity of life you found overseas...drinking tea, playing with children, engaging nationals in conversations, sharing with your teammates. You may find yourself relying more on your own power than on God’s, prioritizing your “to do list” over His – and you’re afraid you’ll lose the part of yourself that you gained on this trip.

- How did your relationship with the Lord change on your trip -- and why do you think it changed?
- Ask someone to hold you accountable to continuing to put God first and rely on Him, not yourself.
NOW WHAT?

It's time to move forward. We don't have to let go of the experience in order to begin living our lives again. We don't have to feel guilty for the things we have been given, so long as we recognize and appreciate the blessing we have been given living in the U.S. We don't have to choose between cultures, we can adapt and find ways to incorporate the best of both cultures into our lives. And we don't have to do it alone...the same God who walked with us on the mountaintop flew back to America with us and stands ready to lead you, carry you, encourage and shape you just as He did overseas.

REMEMBER - The Hebrew word for remember, Zah-khar, is found 233 times in the Old Testament. The ability to remember is critically important in our relationship with God and requires much more energy in a world where we are constantly bombarded with the enemy's schemes that try to get us to FORGET all of the work God had done! In the same way that the Israelites constructed monuments to remember what God has done, so you can too. Yours may not be statues or altars – but in today's world your photos, videos, journals and conversations will serve to remind you of what your experience was this summer.

[Photo Sharing Tips -- Do share your pictures with friends and family on social media, in albums and from your phone! It can be a great way to get conversations started about what you did, but be very selective about what you share.

• People are not going to look through 500 pictures. To people that did not go on the trip, most of the pictures will look the same. Choose no more than 150 of the best pictures that capture the entire trip to post online.

• Make sure the majority of pictures you post are focused on the ministry aspects of the trip. If this is the only exposure someone gets of your trip, what do you want them to take away from it?

• Let your pictures and captions tell the story of what God is doing, not as much what you are doing.]

REFLECT - What skills did you come home with that you never recognized in yourself before? How can you continue to hone these skills? What will you do to maintain relationships – with teammates and those you met overseas? How can you become a “promoter” of missions to those around you? In the trip evaluation, we’ll be handing you shortly, you’ll be asked to come up with three words to help with this. In doing so you will be reflecting back on your “take-aways.” These will also help you communicate in an efficient, effective, and meaningful way with your family, friends and acquaintances at home.

BEWARE - Expect the spiritual battle to continue even now that you’re home—especially if this experience changed you profoundly. If Satan can render you ineffective at home, even though he’s lost battles overseas, he’s still gaining in your life and in the lives of those around you. If he can derail you now he might be able to turn many people off to future involvement in missions. So please, stand firm. Holding tight to the faith you have developed is your single best defense against the devil's schemes.
PRAY! - For the work, our missionaries and national partners, the national churches and leaders, the people who came to Christ and nation in which they live. Pray that God would clarify the next steps of obedience for you. Continue to follow Him and take radical steps of faith just like you did when you applied all those months ago to join this project in the first place!

TAKE A NEXT STEP - Rest assured that while the project may be over, God isn’t finished with you yet and your partnership with Him can continue for a lifetime. The same God you trusted for every step overseas is standing beside you today, ready to guide you still.

How about a next step on your spiritual journey? It could many things…perhaps baptism, becoming a small group leader, serving locally or perhaps even considering full-time service globally. Talk to your small group leader and a few trusted friends about this. Let us know on this “Trip Evaluation” we’re handing you now. Then follow through! The same God who was with you on this trip is with you now. He will be your guide and He will provide!

AIRPORT DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Complete the following sentence:

As, I return to the U.S. I feel…

Going back will enable me to…

I think the hardest part of going back for me will be…

I think the easiest part of going back for me will be…

I cannot wait to…

I expect the reception from my family will be…

I anticipate my church to be…

I picture my friends being…

I am looking forward to…

I predict I will need help in…

These are two ways I can realistically share and celebrate my trip with those who supported and/or sent me:

1.

2.
PHOTO SHARING TIPS

Please share your pictures with friends and family on Facebook! It can be a great way to get conversations started about what you did, but be very selective about what you put up.

• People are not going to look through 500 pictures. To people that did not go on the trip, most of the pictures will look the same. Choose no more than 150 of the best pictures that capture the entire trip to post online.

• Make sure the majority of pictures you post are focused on the ministry aspects of the trip. If this is the only exposure someone gets of your trip, what do you want them to take away from it?

• Let your pictures and captions tell the story of what God is doing, not as much what you are doing.