

Ten Questions for Debriefing after a Mission Trip

YOUR CHURCH GROUP has just returned from a fantastic mission trip to some far-flung corner of the world, or from someplace much closer to home.

But once people get home, CNN, Twitter, soccer, school, work, and church activities have a way of crowding out the spiritual focus that, just a few days earlier, seemed certain to shape their lives.

That's why it's important to have an effective debriefing plan in place even before leaving home.

Roger Peterson, author of *Maximum Impact Short-Term Mission*, says that the debriefing process, a time of reflection after your short-term mission, is more important than the actual mission. While not discounting the work that's

ahead of time what you expect of them on their return.

Here, then, are ten potential debriefing questions adapted from Tim Dearborn and Dr. David Livermore, author of *Serving with Eyes Wide Open*. Share them with your team before you leave, and then make sure you carve out time upon your return to reflect on them.

1. What did I learn about myself on my short-term mission?
2. What did I learn about God?
3. What did I learn about the people, the church, and the Christian community in the area where I served?
4. What did I learn about how culture impacts the ways people live and understand the gospel?
5. What did I learn about justice, economics, poverty, and politics during my short-term mission?



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Over the years I have served alongside thousands of people on mission trips in Mexico and attended countless conferences sponsored by denominations and mission organizations. Here's what I have learned: the most effective people in God's kingdom are the ones who take seriously the need to stop, reflect, and consider what God is saying to them through their mission.

Tim Dearborn, director of faith and development at World Vision International, says that in order for people to really gain insight from this debriefing time, they need to know what to look for. This means letting your team know

6. As a follower of Christ, what did I learn that can help me be a more fully devoted disciple?
7. How might my faith be different if I had grown up where I was serving, as opposed to in my home community?
8. What did I learn or experience that will change the way I live and represent Jesus in my home community and church?
9. What have I learned about my own Christian calling?
10. How can I continue to support the ongoing work in the area where I served?

There you have it. Ten questions to consider as your team returns to your home church. But let me go one step further and give you a bonus question:

What difference would it make if you lived each day with the same intensity and focus on Jesus and others as you did on your mission? And then ask your team this follow-up question: What keeps you from living life at that level now?

For most of us, the lessons learned from serving on short-term mission trips may take years to fully grasp.

But that's okay. It's a journey. ■



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