



DEBRIEFING GUIDE

Journal and Devotional

Name:

Trip Dates:

Trip Location(s):

LIVING FOR THE LONG HAUL

LEARNING THE LESSONS GOD HAS FOR YOU

Most short-term mission trips leave team members overwhelmed by the wide range of new experiences. The hectic schedule and flurry of activity make it difficult to sort through the events that God is using to initiate lasting spiritual life change within us. No matter how many times one has been involved in cross cultural ministry, careful evaluation and meditation is necessary in order to fully process the events experienced. Here is a step-by-step process that has proven effective for many short-term missionaries.

Step 1: Carefully list in Chart 1 all the main events/activities that have significantly impacted your life while on your short-term trip. List the events randomly as they come into your mind. Read through your journal entries to jog your memory. Do a mental walk-through of each day. Try to be as thorough as possible in developing your list.

Keep in mind that God works in unique ways and what may be significant for one team member may not be for another. Work individually without discussing your thoughts with other team members until you feel your list is complete.

Step 2: Review your list carefully placing an asterisk next to the top four experiences you have identified. Prioritize these from 1-4 beginning with the most significant experience and list them in the appropriate box in Chart 2.

Think about the basic lesson God taught you through each of your top four experiences. Write the basic lesson that corresponds with each significant event or activity in Chart 2. Ask the following questions as you evaluate each of them:

- 1) How should I **BE** different because of this experience?
- 2) What should I **DO** different because of this experience?



CHART ONE

Main Events/Activities



CHART TWO

<u>Main Events/Activities</u>	<u>Big Lessons</u>
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
Dominant Theme	



Step 3: Share your entire list with the rest of the group beginning with the top four. Take note of items you may have overlooked as others share. Pay attention to the different ways God is speaking to different team members based on the experiences that most dramatically impacted their lives.

Step 4: Review the top four experiences with the corresponding lessons God is teaching you. Carefully search out the dominant theme that surfaces. Pray for wisdom and ask the Holy Spirit to teach you. Praise God for the privilege of serving Him in this capacity. Humble yourself in His presence. Take your time; don't be afraid of a few minutes of silence.

Ask the following questions as you meditate over your list: 1) Is there a connection between the lessons you have noted or do they seem to be independent of each other? 2) Is there a correlation between these lessons and something God has been teaching you prior to the trip?

Step 5: Write your answer to the following question in no more than one sentence: "I heard you went on a short-term mission trip to *name of country*. How was it?" _____

Getting started is always difficult. Most team members can honestly begin by saying, "It was life changing? God taught me . . ." Then briefly describe the dominant theme that arises from the lessons God taught you while serving on your short-term trip. *Be careful to focus on the lesson/theme not the event while drafting your sentence.* Focus on the content first. Make a rough draft for now in Chart 3. After you have fleshed out the content, go back and make the changes necessary to clarify your main thought.



CHART THREE

Main Events/Activities/Big Lessons

I heard you went on a short-term mission trip to
----- . How was it?

It was life changing! God really taught me . . .



Step 6: Take turns sharing your sentences with each other as a group by answering the question, “I heard you went on a short-term mission trip to *name of country*. How was it?” As each person shares, take a minute for feedback to make sure the main lesson is being communicated effectively.

Step 7: Memorize your concise response to this question. It will be the most common question you face upon your return home. Every time you repeat your answer you will be reinforcing the central truth God taught you while serving on your short-term mission trip. You may find it helpful to write your one sentence answer on a post-it note and keep it in the front of your Bible as a reminder.

Step 8: Look back at Chart 2 of the dominant theme God is teaching you in. Identify some practical **next steps of obedience** that would seal this truth in your heart, facilitating a lasting change in your attitudes and actions. Write these next steps in Chart 4.

CHART FOUR

Next Steps



SHARING YOUR VISION WITH OTHERS

It is common for team members to return home with great zeal and passion, anxious to share with everyone the many new experiences associated with their short-term mission trip. Every true Christian would love to see my slides and hear of my adventures – right? Wrong. Keep in mind, the world did not come to a stop when you left with your team!

Most of your friends will be interested in hearing about your trip. But their level of interest will likely be superficial when compared to your desire to share. One of the most common frustrations among team members after returning home is this seeming lack of interest in their mission trip demonstrated by people in their social network. Here are a few practical pointers that will help you communicate effectively and avoid unnecessary frustration when sharing with someone about your trip.

1. Understand your circles of influence. You have the opportunity and responsibility to influence the people who know about your participation in a short-term mission trip. Of course, not everyone in your sphere of influence has the same level of interest in your trip. As a general rule, the people who are closest to you are most interested and the people with whom you have only a casual relationship have the least interest.

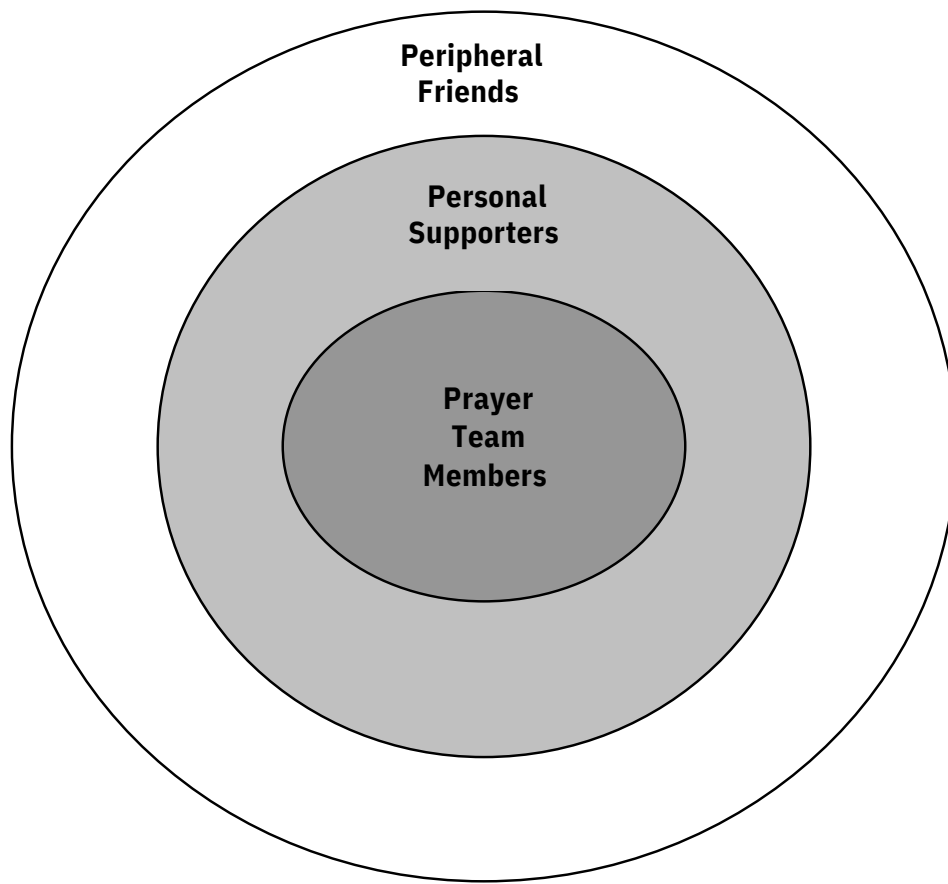
As it relates to your short-term mission trip, the people in your social network or sphere of influence could be divided into three groups:

- *Peripheral Friends.* These represent the people with whom you have only casual relationships. They are on the periphery of your social network. They may or may not be Christians. They have a very limited knowledge of your trip and in turn a superficial interest. If you are a student, most of your classmates will fall in this category.



- *Personal Supporters.* These represent the people who know you fairly well or identify more closely with your purpose in participating in the short-term project. Most of these people are Christians. These are the people who gave in support of your trip and were involved on some level in praying for your ministry. Many of the people in your church family or campus group are in this category.
- *Prayer Team Members.* These represent the people who were just as much a part of the mission team as you were based on their consistent and sacrificial intercession. While they may have contributed financially, they found a sense of ownership in your team through their prayers. Most team members have less than twenty of this kind of supporter.

CIRCLES OF INFLUENCE



2. Identify their level of interest. The most effective way to discern a person's interest level is to identify where they fit in your circle of influence. While nearly all the people in your social network will be interested in hearing about your trip, they will not all have the same level of interest. When peripheral friends ask you how your trip went, they will not be expecting anything more than a one or two sentence response. More than that will usually result in an uncomfortable glance at the watch or look over the shoulder. Their polite, "I heard you went on a mission trip. How was it?" is in many cases on par with, "Hi, how are you today?" They are expecting the typical, "Fine, thank you." Anything more will usually catch them off guard or make them feel uncomfortable.

When personal supporters inquire about your trip, they are expecting more than a few sentences. They have been more involved in your ministry and are entitled to a more thorough accounting of your activities. Prayer team members will be hungry to know the intimate details of your experience moving beyond what you did to what God did in you.

3. Share information that is appropriate for their level of interest. Earlier you were asked to review the events and activities from your trip that most impacted your life. You then narrowed this list down to the top four events and noted the corresponding lessons God taught you through them. From this short list you drafted a one sentence answer to the question, "I heard you went on a mission trip to *name of country*. How was it?"

This process helps clarify the information most suitable for the people in your circle of influence. When peripheral friends inquire about your trip, share your one sentence answer with a sense of confidence and excitement. When sharing with personal supporters, review with them the top four events you have identified as being the most significant. Be sure to explain what God taught you through the events and not just what you did. Often this can be done in the time given to share at your local church or campus group.



Most team members have personal supporters outside their hometown and find it impossible to communicate with them all face to face. It would be advisable to draft a letter to these people outlining the events God used to impact your life and express your gratitude for their prayerful and financial involvement.

Prayer team members deserve to hear the most detailed account of your experience. In addition to sharing the top four events and the lessons God taught you, they should hear of your struggles, next steps of obedience and possible changes in your future plans. Some team members edit portions of their journal and distribute it to prayer team members. This kind of sharing is best done in a small group setting or in one-on-one meetings. Remember, most team members have less than twenty people who fit in this category.

4. Bait the hook. When you share with people on the periphery of your social network, it is important not to overwhelm them with information that is not in keeping with their level of interest. But, you should attempt to arouse further curiosity by the way you respond. A carefully worded, positive response can lead to follow-up questions that allow you to share more fully about your experience without dumping on someone who has not demonstrated genuine interest.

Work hard at crafting and memorizing your one sentence response. Pray that God would use it to inspire people with deeper levels of interest in His global purposes. Use your platform for influence to its fullest extent believing God to multiply your new vision in others!

