

MISSIONS
SESSION
MENTOR
SHIP

mission trips
your trip starts here.



OVERVIEW.

Youth groups have been going on mission trips for hundreds of years. Although tremendous good has been done in the communities, and the lives of students have been radically changed, we are sometimes left with questions about our experience: Are we missing the mark? Did we truly make a difference in this community?

As Christ-followers, we have the responsibility to share the love of Jesus to all nations. With this responsibility comes a weight: a weight that exposes how impactful our words, actions, thoughts, and heart can truly be within the community we are immersed in this summer. You have stepped into a much larger picture...a picture that extends beyond one week and contributes to the overall sustainable development within a community. At Next Step, our heart is to see short-term missions collide with long-term community development, of which you have now become a part.

We want to be the first to say that Next Step has often struggled to find this balance on our trips. We have learned a few things over the years in our time serving within communities and hope to share those with you. This learning process is meant to be exciting, and we hope that you find this information uplifting! We will continue to share in this challenge as we wrestle with what it means to serve within the body of Christ.

WHAT'S INSIDE?

The content of the training is organized by four core values of what we believe characterizes a well-equipped individual serving within a community for a week-long mission trip. Each core value includes the following information to guide your preparation:

1. **Scripture:** This verse is the central idea and base of all other content that is shared for that particular core value.
2. **Focus Points:** These concepts should help guide the thoughts, actions, heart, and motivation behind your mission trip.
3. **Key Takeaway:** A short battle cry for your students to remember and bring with them on their trip.
4. **Discussion Questions:** This will help to promote discussion within your group in order to discover ways to apply these concepts during your trip.

HOW TO USE THIS INFORMATION

This packet is designed to help prepare and train your team of leaders and students. We recommend sharing this information in one of two simple ways!

1. Set aside one meeting to cover all contents of this packet.
2. Set up four separate group meetings, covering one core value at each meeting and diving into deeper study and discussion.

HUMBLE SERVANT.



Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too. You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had. Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave, and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross.

PHILIPPIANS 2:3-8 (the voice, emphasis added)



From this passage, we see the true essence of what it means to serve within the context of a community in which we have no experience: to enter as a humble servant. Humility and servant hood were attitudes that defined and characterized Christ in His time on earth. Beyond observing and admiring the attitude and humility of Christ, we are told that we must have this same attitude.

WHAT MAKES A HUMBLE SERVANT?

1. AVOID POVERTY TOURISM.

Humility is of utmost importance when becoming aware of the way that we perceive the community that we are entering and our purpose for being there. We are not on vacation, nor are we tourists of impoverished places. But instead we are motivated to enter a community as a humble servant, eager to come alongside the members of a particular community and join in the work that is being done to rebuild that community.

2. AVOID A SAVIOR MENTALITY.

Humility requires a deep understanding that there is already work being done in the communities that we enter. We are not the end all of hope for this community, instead a unique and important part of carrying that hope. We must understand that there are people, families, and organizations that already exist in a community working toward community goals. Our job is to support and partner with this community on our trip. Instead of carrying the attitude that we are going to save the community, we have the opportunity to carry the attitude of joy and humility in partnering with Christ's mission of shalom in these neighborhoods that is already taking place.

3. THE GOAL OF THE TRIP IS NOT TO FEEL BETTER ABOUT OURSELVES, BUT IS INSTEAD TO SHARE CHRIST'S LOVE THROUGH COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS.

Humility is about putting the needs of others before our own needs. Like we read in Philippians, we must be motivated as Jesus was when he came to this earth: out of love for others, as opposed to meeting a need inside ourselves to "help someone out who is poor". Please come on your trip with this same motivation, eager to share the joy that comes with being in a relationship with Jesus Christ.

4. DON'T BE AN ELEPHANT: INTENTIONS VS. ACTIONS.

The following story was told to a missionary from her African Christian friend regarding her experience with American mission teams:

“Elephant and Mouse were best friends. One day Elephant said, “Mouse, let’s have a party!” Animals gathered from far and near. They ate. They drank. They sang. And they danced. And nobody celebrated more and danced harder than Elephant. After the party was over, Elephant exclaimed, “Mouse, did you ever go to a better party? What a blast!” But Mouse did not answer. “Mouse, where are you?” Elephant called. He looked around for his friend, and then shrank back in horror. There at Elephant’s feet lay Mouse. His little body was ground into the dirt. He had been smashed by the big feet of his exuberant friend, Elephant. “Sometimes, that is what it’s like to do missions with you Americans,” the African storyteller commented. “It is like dancing with an Elephant.”

-Excerpt from *When Helping Hurts* by Corbett & Fikkert

Had the Elephant taken a humble step back, Elephant would have realized the harm that his actions and words were truly having on Mouse. The intentions of Elephant were good: he wanted to celebrate with Mouse. But the actual impact was harmful to Mouse. We learn about not only having humble intentions when interacting with a new community, but also how those intentions play out in our actions. Allow the needs of the community to come to the forefront of your mind. When interacting with community members, ask yourself if the actions and words you are choosing allow the voice and needs of the community member to be heard and met.

5. ACCEPT ALL PRAISE AND OFFER IT BACK TO HIM.

Many community members will be grateful for the work that you are doing in their home and in their community. Take every opportunity to glorify Christ in the process of receiving praise. When motivated by Him, we quickly offer that praise back to Him. Instead of taking ownership of the work that was done during your week of service, allow Christ to humbly move through you as a tool to progress His kingdom within that community.

KEY TAKEAWAY

Clothing ourselves with humility is of utmost importance when interacting and serving within a community. This humility not only lifts up the residents that you will be working with, but ultimately lifts up the name of Christ. Recognize with excitement, the opportunity that we have to be a small yet significant tool in His work of reconciliation and hope around the world! As Humble Servants, we are eager to partake in the work of Christ. We are motivated to serve for Him. We are able to serve through Him. We are only effective with Him.

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS

1. What are specific parts of Christ's attitude that you desire to replicate during your mission trip? How can your group enter your week serving alongside a community as a humble servant?
2. Describe a time when it was difficult to be humble. How did you handle the situation? What would you do differently or the same?
3. In what situations do you foresee it being difficult to take on this humble attitude during your mission trip?
4. Think of a time when someone displayed humility towards you. What did it feel like to receive humility from that person?

FERVENT LISTENER.



Listen, open your ears, harness your desire to speak, and be slow to anger my brothers and sisters.

JAMES 1:19 (the voice)

Guard your words, mind what you say, and you will keep yourself out of trouble.

PROVERBS 21:23 (the voice)



These passages reveal the value of listening. In order to be quick to listen, we must be slow to speak. Active listening is a way to show others that we care. You will have the opportunity to listen to some incredible stories while serving in a new community. Many community members are eager for someone to simply listen to what they have to say.

WHAT MAKES A FERVENT LISTENER?

1. LEARN THEIR NAME. LISTEN TO THEIR STORY. SHOW THAT INDIVIDUAL THAT YOU CARE, AND LOVE THEM.

You will have the opportunity to work with community members, whether that will be a specific family, an individual, an organization, or an entire neighborhood. With each interaction that you have on your trip, take the time to listen. Allow that person, and his or her personal story, to become the most important thing in that moment. Be consumed with and eager to hear the words coming out of that individual's mouth. Each person has something to offer and that is a story: a story about where that person comes from—past experiences and struggles, joyful accomplishments, family identity, what he/she loves to do, etc. One of the greatest ways to show that you care is through listening.

2. ASK BEFORE YOU POSE.

In order to avoid any miscommunications, it is important to always ask organizations, families, or individuals if you can take pictures while on your trip. Whether you are taking a picture of the people themselves, or the work that you accomplished, it is respectful to ask a community member first, and listen to their response. Taking a picture of someone's home before it is renovated can take away a person's dignity. We don't want someone's home to become an image of poverty and poor living conditions. Instead, recognize what that home means to a particular family or individual. It is home for that family, even if it may not look like the home that you or I live in. Take time to ask the resident about their home: the memories they have there, the length of time they have lived in the home, or their favorite part of the home.

3. BE A STORY-GATHERER.

ASK THOUGHTFUL QUESTIONS.

One of the greatest blessings of a mission trip can come in the form of being able to hear the personal story of a community member. For some individuals, opening up to vulnerably share a part of one's life, is a big step. Be eager to hear. Above that, ask questions to encourage that individual to continue sharing. These questions show interest in a person's life. When re-telling these stories to others, do so in a way that lifts up and encourages that individual.

4. BE A LEARNER!

Take every opportunity that you have to learn from each person that you come in contact with in the community. Being immersed in a new culture can be exhausting with so much new information to take in, but we encourage you to make that process an adventure! Ask community members about their history and what the culture is like from their perspective. Choose to be a learner on the trip. Consume each bit of information that you can, knowing that the effort put into learning is a way to show respect to a community. We also encourage you to be a learner during the time leading up to the trip: gain as much information as possible about the community with which you will be serving before arriving on site this summer. This will help you establish a more trusting relationship with the community from the get-go.

5. LISTEN TO THE VOICE OF THE CREATOR.

Above all, listen to God's voice as you prepare for your trip, and while on your trip. He will speak to you through others, scripture, music, nature, and personal testimony. Take the time to listen to the ways in which He is sharing His love, truth, and hope with you and the community. Without taking time to listen to the words of the Creator, we will have little to offer the families and communities that we are serving alongside.

KEY TAKEAWAY

Listening opens the door to long-lasting relationships. A fervent listener is one that cares about the community, and seeks to invest time and energy into educating oneself of the community at hand. **As Fervent Listeners, we commit to showing care and love to this community through listening and learning.**

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS

1. What does it take to be an active and engaged listener?
2. Who is the best listener you know? What makes them good at listening?
3. What are some examples of times when you spoke before listening? What was the outcome? What may have been different had you taken the time to listen before speaking or formulating a response?
4. How does it make you feel when someone specifically asks you to share something about yourself? Do you feel valued? Loved? Important?
5. What are some good conversation starters with people that you are unfamiliar with? What are some questions that you could ask the community members with whom you are working, either about themselves or about their community?

ZEALOUS DEVELOPER.



This is where God comes in. God has meticulously put this body together; He placed each part in the exact place to perform the exact function He wanted. If all members were a single part, where would the body be? So now, many members function within the one body. The eye cannot wail at the hand, “I have no need for you,” nor could the head bellow at the feet, “I won’t go one more step with you.” It’s actually the opposite. The members who seem to have the weaker functions are necessary to keep the body moving; the body parts that seem less important we treat as some of the most valuable; and those unfit, untamed, unpresentable members we treat with an even greater modesty. That’s something the more presentable members don’t need. But God designed the body in such a way that greater significance is given to the seemingly insignificant part. That way there should be no division in the body; instead, all the parts mutually depend on and care for one another. If one part is suffering, then all the members suffer alongside it. If one member is honored, then all the members celebrate alongside it.

1 CORINTHIANS 12:18-26 (the voice, emphasis added)



WHAT MAKES A ZEALOUS DEVELOPER?

1. CULTIVATE RELATIONSHIPS.

While on your trip, it is important to understand that we can create buildings that are durable and have a solid foundation meeting a true need in the community, but our work must extend beyond physical buildings and reach into the lives and hearts of people. Our work is that of eternal matters, seeking to expand the kingdom of Christ in the hearts of all people. Construction is a platform that we use at Next Step to meet families within communities and to build relationships with those families. Take time during your workday to step back from construction and interact with community members. May we push ourselves to view each individual that we encounter on our mission trip as a part of the body of Christ: believing that each part is valuable to the overall function of the body. In that, we will inevitably build relationships that suffer alongside those suffering, and celebrate alongside those celebrating.

2. POTENTIAL VS. PLIGHT.

It is important to understand the deep need that exists within the community in which you will be working this summer. Many of these communities reveal statistics regarding poverty, alcoholism, unemployment, suicide, storm damage, homelessness, and disease that is rampant. These statistics reflect a reality that we must not ignore. But in that reality, it is even more important that we allow these communities and the individuals that live within these communities, to shake themselves free of the reputation they have developed as being impoverished, unemployed, or ruined from a storm. We must look beyond the statistics and define communities by their potential.

As human beings, we often step into the identity that others place on us. If others identify us as the class clown, we will often say words, tell jokes, or act in a way that supports that identity. It is the same within a community: we can indirectly continue a cycle of poverty or hopelessness by fixating on statistics that define a community as impoverished and hopeless. Our perspective on the condition of a community will impact the way that we interact and engage with the people within that community. Let's take a step beyond the statistics (although accurate) and interact with individuals and the community in a way that lifts them up as a significant part of the body of Christ.

3. EMPOWERMENT VS. DEPENDENCY.

Next Step Ministries believes that short term missions done effectively can empower a community, as opposed to supply ongoing assistance to a community. We seek to build relationships that create confidence within a community, assuring that the community is able to function as a sustainable unit. We are all tools within the community to support and encourage that process. Our goal is to work ourselves into a new role within each community in which we help the community move from dependency to active participation in the process of rebuilding itself. In that, we ask that you work with community members instead of for community members. Take the time during your trip to work alongside the family for which we are building for and teach them (or mutually learn) construction skills. Understand that offering someone five minutes of your time to teach is much more valuable and sustainable than giving away five dollars in cash.

4. DEVELOPMENT VS. RELIEF.

Relief within a community creates a provider receiver relationship: one that discredits what a local individual may have to offer in the process of rebuilding and replaces it with what an outsider provides or gives to that individual. Development within a community is walking with people, being relational, taking time to listen, and creating opportunities for empowerment. Development is focusing on efforts that will extend your work beyond one week, and help to create sustainable change within the community. It is important that, with every word or action we take during our week, we promote active participants, as opposed to passive recipients. This can come in the simplest of forms. If a community member asks to help with a project, or move something in their home, we often times reject the offer. After all, we are in the community to serve, so we insist on doing it for the community member. Instead of rejecting that offer, we encourage you to invite each community member into the building and serving process. Collectively build, learn, and serve.

5. ASSET-BASED VS. NEEDS-BASED APPROACH.

We have the opportunity to approach our mission trip with either an asset-based approach or a needs-based approach. An example of a needs-based approach involves asking a community member, "What do you need?" This creates a dynamic between you and the community in which you must be the provider of the community's needs. It promotes a savior mentality and passive dependency. An asset-based approach instead takes the time to ask a community member what they already have and encourages the use of what already exists in the community. Be creative in finding ways to involve the community during your trip!

KEY TAKEAWAY

As the body of Christ, we have the opportunity to become zealous developers through the way that we interact with the community we are serving. Simply becoming aware of these concepts is a great start. You have the opportunity to be a part of empowering a community, and to extend your services beyond one week through pouring yourself into the people, resources, leadership, and skills that already exist in a community. **As Zealous Developers, we are compelled to serve in a way that empowers the community. We believe in the people of this community and view them as a valuable part within the body of Christ.**

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS

1. How have you seen the Body of Christ evident in your own youth group? What different parts exist? What are some examples to show that all parts of the body really are necessary in order for the overall body to function effectively?
2. In past experiences with friends, family members, peers at school, or people in your neighborhood, how have you interacted with someone that is seemingly less significant than you, or maybe has less to offer? How could you interact with that person differently in order to communicate/show that you believe that person is valuable and has something to contribute?
3. Which of the above concepts seems most unfamiliar to you? How has your thinking changed? What are some questions you may still have about these ideas?

DISCONTENT AMBASSADOR.



Therefore, if anyone is united with the Anointed One, that person is a new creation. The old life is gone, and a new life has begun! All of this is a gift from our Creator God, who has pursued us and brought us into a restored and healthy relationship with Him through the Anointed (Jesus). And He has given us the same mission, the ministry of reconciliation, to bring others back to Him. It is central to our good news that God was in the Anointed making things right between Himself and the world. This means He does not hold their sins against them. But it also means He charges us to proclaim the message that heals and restores our broken relationships with God and each other. So we are now ambassadors of the Anointed One, the Liberating King; God has given us a charge to carry through our lives—urging all people on behalf of the Anointed to become reconciled to the Creator God. He orchestrated this: the Anointed One, who had never experienced sin, became sin for us so that in Him we might embody the very righteousness of God.

2 CORINTHIANS 5:17-21 *(the voice, emphasis added)*



This passage reveals the joy that comes with being a proclaimer of God's Good News. We have been reconciled to God and, therefore, have the opportunity to invite others into this same relationship. We are ambassadors of Christ. We have been given a charge to urge all people –on behalf of Christ –to accept His love and grace in our lives. During your mission trip, it may be disheartening and difficult to trust that God is working

in the community. The grim reality and conditions may leave you discouraged and unsure of where to even start when trying to help. The problems in the community may overwhelm you. We encourage you to become a discontent ambassador –to allow your frustrations or discouraging experiences in a community to propel you into action. Become a proclaimer of hope and truth in the midst of pain and suffering.

WHAT MAKES A DISCONTENT AMBASSADOR?

1. CHRIST-CENTERED.

While on your mission trip, community members will know that you are working with a Christian Organization. The community will closely observe how you act and what you say, whether to others in your church group, or to an individual you have never met before. Everything we do must be Christ-centered. As an ambassador of Christ, we represent His name and His kingdom in everything that we do. Take your responsibility as an ambassador seriously and with joy! We represent a living and loving God.

2. COMMIT TO PRAYER.

The most effective way to support a community long-term is to invest and commit to prayer for that community. As stated above, you will read some grim statistics while preparing for your trip. Even more, you may become discouraged by the reality that exists within the community while on your mission trip. Allow those feelings to help you channel every ounce of energy into prayer for God's message of reconciliation and love to reach the community.

3. DON'T STOP.

Allow each experience, each encounter, and each story you hear, to propel you into action even after your mission trip has finished. Continue the story of the community and share it with eagerness. This eagerness can spread awareness of what has happened, but more importantly what is happening within the community. Pray for the families that you met after the trip and find ways to become involved in the community long-term. Move forward with momentum, allowing your feelings of discontent toward the present state of the community to inspire action and continued involvement.

KEY TAKEAWAY

We are ambassadors of Christ. On your weeklong trip, you will have the opportunity to share and represent Christ's love to a community- how incredible! In your preparation and experience, trust that God is actively working to bring hope to a community that may be experiencing depression, addiction, unemployment, destruction. Don't be disheartened, but instead become a discontent ambassador that is even more motivated to share the love and hope of Jesus! **As Discontent Ambassadors, we recognize that we hold a significant responsibility. Our responsibility is to carry Christ's name in a way that honors Him. His strength is our momentum to continue sharing love and hope, when situations are grim and hopeless.**

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS

1. What does it mean to be an ambassador? What specific words can you say, or actions can you take, to represent Christ in a way that honors Him during your mission trip?
2. Share a time when a feeling of frustration or discontent immobilized you. How could you have taken positive action to address these feelings, as opposed to having done nothing?
3. Do you think being discontent with a situation or experience can inspire positive action? Can this discontent motivate us further to share Christ's love?
4. What situations might you come across during your mission trip that will be difficult to see and experience? How can you encourage each other as a team?
5. How can you be praying for the community before arriving this summer?

RECOMMENDED SOURCES.

It is an honor to serve alongside of these communities and partner with you in that process. God will use you in this journey in a very unique and specific way. Please be encouraged to dig deeper into these topics and become experts on the community in which you will be serving.

Here is a list of various sources you can explore in order to continue your learning:

Archive of various tools, trainings, and articles pertaining to Community Development

<http://communitiesfirstassociation.org/tools-archive/>

Toward Better Short-Term Missions

by Darren Carlson

The Gospel Coalition

<http://thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/tgc/2012/06/27/toward-better-short-term-missions/>

The Passion of Christ and the Plight of Our Undocumented Neighbors

by Noel Castellanos

<http://www.cdda.org/blog/12-blog/301-the-passion-of-christ-and-the-plight-of-ourundocumented-neighbors>

10 Paradigm Shifts

by Wendy McCaig

<http://communitiesfirstassociation.org/10-paradigm-shifts-nuts-and-bolts-2/>

When Helping Hurts

by Steve Corbett & Brian Fikkert

Serving with Eyes Wide Open: Doing Short-Term Missions with Cultural Intelligence

by David A. Livermore

Restoring At-Risk Communities: Doing it Together and Doing it Right

by John M. Perkins

Anthropological Insights for Missionaries

by Paul G. Hiebert

Toxic Charity

by Robert Lupton

Beyond Charity: Call to Christian Community Development

by John M. Perkins

Christian Community Development Association Website

www.cdda.org

Interview with Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert, Authors of *When Helping Hurts*

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jzUKZajloJY>