



## SHORT-TERM TEAMS FOLLOW UP

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The following miscellaneous ideas have been collected from a wide variety of churches and other sources which offered the suggestions they found most practical and effective.

### DEBRIEF YOUR TEAM MEMBERS WELL

#### 1. Set all meeting dates in advance.

At the first short-term training session, schedule all required follow-up meetings, including debriefings as well as follow-up sessions with the missions team, and reports to the congregation or other groups.

#### 2. Encourage your on-site host to conduct a debriefing with each team member.

Plan sufficient time into the trip schedule so that the missionary or national host can meet with each short-termer personally for debriefing. Examples of good debriefing questions are provided in Lisa Espineli Chinn's *Reentry Guide for Short-Term Missions Leaders*, see #32.

#### 3. Debrief during the trip.

The team leader should debrief the members throughout the ministry, daily if possible. Before flying home, spend at least several hours allowing participants to express their feelings and thoughts about the trip. Encourage people to articulate what they have learned and what they believe God may be asking of them when they return home. Answers may relate to living a simpler lifestyle, ministering to neighbors, etc. One week after their homecoming, hold another team debrief. The book, *Living for the Long Haul*, by Steve Moore is a great resource for debriefing ideas and can be ordered from [www.kbm.org](http://www.kbm.org) (type the book title into the search option on the home page).

#### 4. Write parents on how to debrief their children after a short-term trip.

Moms and dads need to help their children process their feelings and thoughts when they return from a short-term experience, but many may not recognize the importance of this task nor know how to go about it. Communicate to parents in a letter or email how they can help their children reenter well. For example, suggest they ask their son/daughter specific questions such as: Which part of the mission experience did you enjoy the most? What was the hardest part for you? Tell me about the work project and ministry you were involved in. Whom did you meet? What did you learn about God, yourself and others? Would you recommend a similar trip to friends?

#### 5. Send a memo to the spouse of married short-termers.

If a married person participates on a team without his/her spouse, offer practical questions for opening discussion when he/she returns. Questions might include: What was the best and worst part of this trip? In what ways were your gifts/talents used? How have you changed as a result of this venture? In what ways can I help make your reentry smoother? If appropriate—how could I have better prepared the children and myself for your return? For additional questions see *Reentry Guide for Short-term Mission Leaders* by Lisa Espineli Chinn, see #32.

- 6. Back home, recruit a facilitator to debrief with short-termers.**

Invite a person from your church who has an interest in the area where the team ministered but who did not participate on the trip to serve as debriefing facilitator. This person can help identify those God may be challenging to move to another level of commitment.
- 7. Watch a *GO Prepared* video.**

*GO Prepared* is a six-part, short-term training video series, and the final session focuses on reentry. After viewing the video together as a team, discuss the questions/issues raised. [www.tcci.org](http://www.tcci.org)
- 8. Host a dinner debrief.**

Take each team to a fast-food restaurant and debrief while you eat. For some, it is much easier to share feelings in a relaxed setting over food than to provide the same feedback in written form.
- 9. Meet one-on-one.**

Enjoy a cup of coffee with each short-termer and help him/her process the trip experience.
- 10. Debrief your team leaders.**

Meet face-to-face with each team leader to discuss his/her reentry adjustment as well as to get a report on the team's ministry and surface concerns about the trip and participants. Help the leader understand that it is natural to go through a "low" period following return, even for those who have been on multiple short-term ministries. DualReach offers a sample questionnaire for team leader feedback as well as a list of team leader debriefing questions, see #33.

## EVALUATE CAREFULLY

- 11. Have participants complete a trip evaluation.**

On the plane ride home, team leaders can distribute to participants a feedback sheet to be completed and returned to the leader before debarking. Samples are available in some of the resources listed in #32, and a Team Member Feedback Form is part of the package of resources for sale from DualReach, see #33.
- 12. Request a field evaluation.**

Email to the in-country host an evaluation form to complete on the team leader. Make sure that your team leader knows that you have asked for this report. Clarify whether the information is confidential or will be shared with the leader in a follow-up discussion after the team returns. DualReach offers a more comprehensive On-Site Coordinator Feedback Form, see #33.

## CHALLENGE PARTICIPANTS TO KEEP GROWING

- 13. Target long-term results.**

At the earliest planning stage, determine if the proposed short-term trip significantly furthers your long-term missions goals. Is this trip worth the time and finances? What objective criteria have we established to answer that question? What is the long-term impact we want both on the field and in our congregation and how can we structure the ministry and follow-up to achieve it? DualReach has developed a "Planning for Long-Term Results from Short-Term Missions" worksheet to assist you in the development of goals, activities, measurements and results/follow-up analysis, see #33.
- 14. Encourage discipleship.**

Prior to the trip, explain that short-term missions is about discipleship and that the discipleship process will begin six months before the trip and continue for three months afterward. After the trip is over, meet monthly as a team. The first month, continue the debrief that occurred on the field, helping participants to process their thoughts and feelings. Ask for prayer requests. The next two meetings might be more social in nature yet include praying for each other and processing the shared experiences.

**15. Record team members' thoughts and goals.**

Ask your short-termers to summarize on slips of paper how God spoke to them and how they intend to respond. Place each person's paper in a separate Chinese food carry-out box on which you have written his/her name and "carry out from the trip." Six months later, meet with each participant again, giving him/her the box and inviting discussion and reflection on what was learned and implemented since then. It will be a good reminder of how God worked.

**16. Follow-up with those God seems to have touched.**

One church leader suggests that 25% of all short-termers have a life-changing experience on their ministry trip. Those who have had a transformational change can often be identified via their responses on the debrief/evaluation form or the comments of a team leader. Ask God to help you pinpoint these people and meet with them individually. Encourage them to consider the next step of service and to listen closely for God's direction. Help them find places to serve locally (provide a list of community outreach agencies associated with your church) and invite them to assist you in planning upcoming church missions events. Introduce them to missionaries associated with your fellowship. If they are qualified, invite them to serve as team leaders next year. DualReach's package of eight follow-up resources includes (a) a brainstorming guide, "Maintain the Momentum," to help you follow-up with those ready for further missions challenge, (b) "Don't Stop Now!," a questionnaire for returning short-termers and (c) guidelines for mentors of returning short-termers, see #33.

**17. Ask participants to continue to journal.**

In *Short Term Missions Workbook: From Mission Tourists to Global Citizens* (see #32), Tim Dearborn suggests a number of great reflection questions such as: What gives me a sense of worth and significance? What do I perceive now to be strengths and gifts that God is developing in me? How do I reconcile the sovereign goodness of God with the suffering in the world? How do I want to treat strangers in light of how I was treated? Why was it so much easier to spend time in prayer and Bible study on my trip than once I've returned?

**18. Use a devotional.**

For the 14 days following their trip, ask participants to complete the reentry Bible study *Fishers of Men* by Howard and Bonnie Lisech. This devotional also contains reentry and debrief questions after each lesson, see #32.

**19. Send a follow-up letter.**

Mail a letter to all the short-termers (1) outlining possibilities for longer-term service, (2) presenting opportunities to be involved in a Perspectives class or a missionary preparation program, and (3) inviting them to talk to someone on the missions team about their experiences, questions, vision, future involvement, etc. You may want to include the DualReach "Maintain the Momentum" questionnaire, see #33.

**20. Recruit for local ministry.**

At the celebration report for supporters, ask local ministry representatives to speak for a few minutes regarding how the short-termers could be involved in their ministries. Participants might hear about teaching English as a second language, working with international students, assisting at a rescue mission, etc. Specifically challenge them to consider doing locally what they did overseas.

**21. Offer specific suggestions.**

To help produce a global Christian mindset, encourage people to:

- ♦ **Read.** *Holy Ambition* by Chip Ingram and *Eternity in Their Hearts* by Don Richardson are two good books with which to start. [www.cbd.com](http://www.cbd.com)
- ♦ **Pray.** Add short-termers to the list of those who receive the newsletters of several missionaries supported by the church.

- ♦ **Study.** Two suggested resources are *Missions: God's Heart for the World* by Paul Borthwick and *Until the Whole World Knows* by Alicia Britt Chole. [www.cbd.com](http://www.cbd.com)
- ♦ **Learn.** Encourage them to attend a missions conference or ACMC conference ([www.acmc.org](http://www.acmc.org)) in the area and take the Perspectives course ([www.perspectives.org](http://www.perspectives.org)).
- ♦ **Serve.** Suggest local cross-cultural ministries in which they could get involved.

## 22. Stay in touch.

Remind the short-termers to stay in contact with one or two people whom they met on their trip. Receiving communication from a missionary or national is a reminder of their great trip experience as well as a memory jogger to pray for the ongoing ministry.

## 23. Affirm the team leaders.

Once all the teams return, take the team leaders out for a dinner together. During the meal, give each: (a) notes from at least four of their team members that describe what they appreciated about the leader, (b) a card signed by the senior pastor expressing thanks for leading the team, and (c) a card of appreciation signed by each member of the missions team.

## 24. Develop a follow-up team.

Form a team to follow-up with each short-termer who has indicated a desire to go further in missions. You might want to use a missionary who attends your church to help in this activity.

## IMPACT THE CONGREGATION

### 25. Sponsor a trip celebration.

When the team returns, have them host a celebration, inviting all those who prayed or contributed financially or in some other way toward their ministry.

### 26. Share over ice cream.

On a Sunday night in late August, invite the congregation for a "Scoop on Short-Term—make your own ice cream sundae." Use your short-termers as servers. Once everyone has made a sundae and been seated at tables, present a 15-minute program that includes a short, well-prepared testimony from one person from each team. Then have two short-termers sit at each table and talk about their trips. After 10 minutes, move the short-termers to a different table so that everyone hears from two others.

### 27. Produce a video.

As summer teams return from their assignments, videotape interviews, then produce a 15-minute compilation to be shown in your church in September. If you combine it with a short message on missions, the entire service will be focused on global outreach.

### 28. Videotape "what God taught me" testimonies for sermon illustrations.

Shortly after they return, ask all short-termers to prepare a three-minute testimony focusing on one lesson God taught them or something they learned about God through their experience. Videotape each story, then compile an index of topics noting the exact tape-footage location of each. Give both the tape and index to your senior pastor. When a future sermon addresses one of the topics on the list, your pastor can use the videotaped testimony or invite the short-termer to share the personal illustration during your church service.

## EXPAND GLOBAL IMPACT

### 29. Form a task force.

Start a group to meet additional needs of the country/people where your short-term team served. For example, one church formed a Zambia task force that was able to obtain \$40,000 worth of donated medical supplies, and a dentist raised money from the Rotary Club for a portable dental unit. Assign

the task force to train other short-termers going to the same country. One church made the task force a sub-group of the missions team and responsible for everything regarding ministry in that country. This task force can coordinate fundraisers, circulate prayer requests, purchase supplies, make crafts for the team, transport people to and from the airport, take care of children whose parents are away on a trip, etc.

### 30. Launch an email prayer chain.

Begin an email prayer chain so that when prayer requests come in from the country/missionaries/national church the team visited, you can distribute the prayer requests to everyone interested.

## MISCELLANEOUS

### 31. Great websites

- ◆ Deeper Roots / [www.deeperroots.com](http://www.deeperroots.com)
- ◆ Fellowship of Short-term Mission Leaders / [www.fstml.org](http://www.fstml.org)
- ◆ Miscellaneous websites / [www.mislinks.org/practical/shterm.htm](http://www.mislinks.org/practical/shterm.htm)
- ◆ Missiontriptools.com / [www.missiontriptools.com/](http://www.missiontriptools.com/)
- ◆ National Short-term Mission Conference / [www.nstmc.org](http://www.nstmc.org)
- ◆ Short-term Missions / [www.shorttermmissions.com](http://www.shorttermmissions.com)
- ◆ Short-term Mission Resources / [www.ywam.org/books/short\\_term\\_mission\\_resources.htm](http://www.ywam.org/books/short_term_mission_resources.htm)

### 32. Great books

- ◆ *Short-term Missions Workbook: From Mission Tourists to Global Citizens* by Tim Dearborn, InterVarsity Press / [www.intervarsitypress.com](http://www.intervarsitypress.com)
- ◆ *Reentry Guide for Short-term Mission Leaders* by Lisa Espineli Chinn, Deeper Roots Publications / [www.deeperroots.com](http://www.deeperroots.com)
- ◆ *Coming Home: Reentry Devotions for a Successful Return* by Howard and Bonnie Lisech, Deeper Roots Publications / [www.deeperroots.com](http://www.deeperroots.com)

### 33. Downloadable resources

The following materials for short-term missions follow-up are provided on the DualReach website <http://www.dualreach.org/missions/resources/8-st-res.shtml>

- ◆ Personal Reflection Questions from Young Nak Presbyterian Church (free)
- ◆ A Debriefing Schedule and Outline from Young Nak Church (free)
- ◆ 8 Resources to Increase the Long-Term Impact of Your Short-Termers (\$15.00)
  - ✓ Planning for Long-Term Results from Short-Term Missions
  - ✓ On-Site Coordinator Feedback Form
  - ✓ Team Leader Feedback Form
  - ✓ Team Member Feedback Form
  - ✓ Team Leader Debriefing Questions
  - ✓ Maintain the Momentum—Missions Team Brainstorming List
  - ✓ Don't Stop Now! –How to Extend the Impact of Your Short-Term Ministry
  - ✓ Mentoring Guidelines to Help Returning Short-Termers

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- ◆ DualReach does not necessarily endorse all of the positions and activities of the organizations listed above.
  - ◆ For more ideas on mobilizing your church for global impact, subscribe to DualReach's *Synergy Newsletter* at [www.dualreach.org](http://www.dualreach.org).