



mission

MINDSET

HOW TO SERVE WELL IN THE
COMMUNITY YOU ARE VISITING



SERVE WELL

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? Did we enter this community responsibly and with the right mindset?

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 you are immersed in this week. 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, which you have now become a part of.

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 that 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. Thanks and have a great trip!

Barak Andy Todd

BARAK, ANDY, AND TODD

co-founders and directors

OVERVIEW

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 element at each meeting and diving into deeper study and discussion.

WHAT'S INSIDE

Our desire is not just that you serve in the community you are visiting this summer, but that you **SERVE WELL**.

Each letter represents an element that we believe characterizes a well-equipped individual serving within a community for a week-long mission trip. We have broken each element down into the following points: scripture, description, key takeaway and discussion questions.

W

WHAT'S YOUR WHY

Exploring your heart behind serving and why you are on this mission trip.

E

EMPHASIZE GIFTS

Believing that every member of a community is an expert in something and has talents to contribute.

L

LISTEN AND LEARN

Focusing on relationship building and learning about and from the community.

L

LIVE IT

Focusing on how to live out a mission mindset when you get back home to your own community.

W

WHAT'S YOUR WHY

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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

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From this passage, we see the true essence of what it means to serve within the context of a community in which we have never been: to enter humbly as a learner and a guest. Humility and servanthood 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. As you prepare for this trip, we encourage you to take some time to ask yourself why you are choosing to serve in this community and what is driving your motivation using the checkpoints on the following page.

WHY ARE YOU SERVING?

1 | Are you coming as a poverty tourist or as a humble servant?

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 | Are you coming in thinking you are their savior or trusting that Jesus is the only one who can save?

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 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 and are the best thing that has happened to the community, we have the opportunity to carry the attitude of joy and humility in partnering with Christ's mission to shalom in these neighborhoods.

3 | Are you coming to feel better about yourself or 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 | Are you coming as an elephant or are you thinking through how your actions affect the community?

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 | Are you coming in to receive praise or to offer all praise 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

Uncovering our 'why' for serving is essential for effective ministry in the community you are entering. As we read in Philippians, we are to do nothing out of selfish ambition. When we enter communities with a humble attitude and the mind of a servant, we can 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!

FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS

- 1 | What is your why for serving on this mission trip? Has that changed after reading this information?
- 2 | 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 humbly?
- 3 | Describe a time when it was difficult to be humble. How did you handle the situation? What would you do differently or the same?
- 4 | In what situations do you foresee it being difficult to take on this humble attitude during your mission trip?

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EMPHASIZE GIFTS

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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

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HOW CAN WE EMPHASIZE PEOPLE'S GIFTS?

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. But our work must extend beyond physical building 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 build relationships with those families. 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 that are celebrating.

2 | Emphasize potential instead of plight.

It is important to understand the deep need that exists within the community you will be working in 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 of the reputation that they have developed as impoverished, unemployed, or ruined from a storm. We must look beyond the statistics and define communities by the potential that exists.

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 others and the community in a way that lifts them up as a significant part of the body of Christ and emphasizes their gifts.

3 | Emphasize empowerment instead of dependency.

Next Step Ministries believes that short-term missions done effectively can empower a community, as opposed to creating ongoing assistance within a community. We seek to build relationships that create confidence within communities: that a 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 that we currently serve in: that the community will not be dependent receivers forever, but instead become active participators in the process of rebuilding their community.

In that, we ask that you do work with community members instead of for community members. Take the time during your trip to work alongside the family that 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 | Emphasize development instead of 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 that 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 to do 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 | Emphasize asset-based instead of 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, that we 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 a community.

KEY TAKEAWAY

As the body of Christ, we have the opportunity to emphasize gifts 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 into the people, resources, leadership, and skills that already exist in a community.

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, fellow 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 you believe that person is valuable and has something to contribute?
- 3 | What are some examples of providing relief to a community? What are some examples of developing a community? What is the difference between relief and development? How can you promote development and empowerment in the community during your mission trip?



LISTEN AND LEARN

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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

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These passages reveal the value of listening. In order to be quick to listen, we must be slow to speak. Actively 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.

HOW CAN WE LISTEN WELL?

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 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 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 may have come from, past experiences and struggles, joyful accomplishments, who his or her family is, 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 request. 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 live in. Instead take time to ask the resident about their home: the memories they have there, how many years they have lived in that home, or what their favorite part of the home is.

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 leading up to the trip: gain as much information about the community you will be serving with 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 that He is sharing His love, truth, and hope to 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. When you listen and learn, you are showing that you care about the community, and are seeking to invest time and energy into educating yourself about the community and the individuals you are working alongside.

FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS

- 1 | What does it take to be an active and engaged listener?
- 2 | 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?
- 3 | How does it make you feel when someone specifically asks you to share something about yourself? Do you feel valued? Loved? Important?
- 4 | What are some good conversations starters with people that you are unfamiliar with? What are some questions that you could ask the community members that you are working with, either about themselves or about their community? Create a list with your youth group!



LIVE IT

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Brothers and sisters, it doesn't make any sense to say you have faith and act in a way that denies that faith. Mere talk never gets you very far, and a commitment to Jesus only in words will not save you. It would be like seeing a brother or sister without any clothes out in the cold and begging for food, and saying, "Shalom, friend, you should get inside where it's warm and eat something," but doing nothing about his needs—leaving him cold and alone on the street. What good would your words alone do?

JAMES 2:14-16

The Voice

And you, beloved, are the light of the world. A city built on a hilltop cannot be hidden. Similarly it would be silly to light a lamp and then hide it under a bowl. When someone lights a lamp, she puts it on a table or a desk or a chair, and the light illuminates the entire house. You are like that illuminating light. Let your light shine everywhere you go, that you may illumine creation, so men and women everywhere may see your good actions, may see creation at its fullest, may see your devotion to Me, and may turn and praise your Father in heaven because of it.

MATTHEW 5:14-16

The Voice

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We have the opportunity as Christians to shine His light and do His work around the world and especially in our own communities. This mission trip is a launching ground to teach you how to serve and love others and propel you to do the same in your own community. It's essential to serve well on your trip so that you can learn how to do so when you get home.

HOW CAN WE LIVE IT?

1 | By being 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. Know that 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. This is one of the key ways we live out His gospel.

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. Take those feelings and 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.

Also, our greatest desire is that you will use this mission trip to propel you to serve and love in your own community. Schedule a meeting with your youth group for after your trip to start thinking through how you can take what you learned and use it in your own church and community. Serve alongside local ministries and organizations who are helping vulnerable populations. Be a light in your hometown.

KEY TAKEAWAY

As we Live It, we are ultimately 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. While it can be easy to become disheartened, we pray that God inspires you to live out the gospel while on this trip and long after you come home.

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 | 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?
- 3 | What situations might you come across during your mission trip that will be difficult to see and experience? How can you use each other as encouragement?
- 4 | How can you be praying for the community before arriving this summer?
- 5 | What are some ways you think of right now to live out the Gospel in your own community?

RESOURCES

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:

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)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=jzUKZajloJY

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

communitiesfirstassociation.org/tools-archieve