

## How To Prepare For Your Short-Term Mission Trip

Short-term missionaries serve well and have a better experience when they are properly prepared

*Helpful Information When Considering a Mission Trip, Written by Mike Pettengill:*

*“Be a learner not a knower. Be a server not a master. Be a listener not a speaker. Go with only the expectations that you are open to God’s plan and you want to be used in any way he wants to use you. Go with the heart that you have been sent by God. Act like a diplomat of God’s kingdom, because you are.”*

When you prepare yourself for your mission trip you need to train your heart. Don’t just rush into a mission trip with an approach that you have to reach the whole country in a week. As a missionary for the Lord you must alter your perspective in order to be a humble servant. You must prepare yourself in ways that may not be typical in our Western lifestyles. As you prepare for your mission trip you need to focus on four key points: prayer, service, flexibility and relationships.

**Prayer** – Pray in advance that the Lord would soften your heart and the hearts of those you will serve. Pray you die to your pride so when you struggle with culture, language or ministry you remain loving. Pray for your teammates, nationals, the long term missionaries and your family staying back home. Pray God will show you what he wants you to see and you don’t force your will on those around you. Arthur Tappan Pierson, 19<sup>th</sup> Century pastor said, “Every step in the progress of missions is directly traceable to prayer.”

**Service** – You are going on your mission trip to be a servant. You are there to serve exactly how the long-term missionaries and the nationals want you to serve, not how you perceive is best. Have a servant’s heart to all those around you, including your teammates. Serve as Christ served. Be humble and accept your role. Your ability, skills and training are less important on the mission field than your willingness to avail yourself God’s will. The joy of serving others glorifies God. When we give sacrificially of ourselves we show the passion, mercy and love of Christ. Pastor and author Tim Keller said, “Because Jesus served you in such a radical way, you have a joyful need to serve.”

**Flexibility** – Never forget that Satan is involved. He will try to waylay your plans. In addition, other cultures do things differently than you. Die to your schedules, plans and expectations and know God will have you do exactly what he wants you to do. Your plans will be altered...get over it. Instead of complaining about the changes or problems, understand that the fulltime missionaries with whom you are serving deal with this kind of uncertainty daily. Throughout Scripture we see examples of flexibility in service to the Lord (Genesis 12; Mark 1:16-18; Matthew 2:7-12; Acts 25:9-12; Philippians 1:23). Flexibility is being amenable to the plans and thoughts of others. It is allowing God to work in a way that is different than your plan. Let the Lord amaze you with his diversity.

**Relationships** – No matter what project you think you are there to do, understand you are there to show the love and mercy of Christ. Your plans, projects and schedules are secondary. You are there to show grace to others. You don't need to speak the local language to show love and compassion. Show the locals you love them so much you came all that distance to see them. Focus on people and not projects. Christ's mercy and justice isn't only demonstrated through your sweat and effort. It can be shown through your soft touch and kind words.

Over the years we have talked to many churches and learned how they prepare (or don't) their members for mission endeavors. Reading, in the Reformed culture, is a typical way to prepare for...well...anything. If you are a reader and want to prepare for short-term missions we would recommend the books *The Whole In Our Gospel* by Richard E. Stearns and *Mack & Leeann's Guide to Short-Term Missions* by Leeann and Mack Stiles. Also, you can read the articles like "Short-Term Missions: Blessing or Bother?" by Dan and Carol Iverson, missionaries to Japan and, my article, ["Send Me Your Short-Term Missionaries."](#)

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