



**CHANGED
FOR LIFE**

GETTING STARTED

LEADER/TEAM
MATERIALS

Kurt Ver Beek, JoAnn Van Engen, David Livermore, Lisa Van Engen

PREPARING A SHORT-TERM MISSION TEAM

During these six sessions you will have the opportunity to work with a team of committed volunteers who are preparing themselves to enter another culture and come alongside hosts in ministry. For some members of the team, this may be a first-time experience entering another culture, regardless of whether you're traveling to another country or to a different community within your own country. Other members of your team may have participated in trips like this before. No matter what the team members' backgrounds are, you'll work together during the coming weeks to bond as a team, set goals, and seek to be changed for life.

SETTING THE TONE

It is important to note that when we go on a short-term mission trip, it is not our mission that we go on, but God's. God is the one who is already at work in the community that you will visit, just as God is already at work among the members of your team. Focusing on what God is doing is critical. That is why prayer, bible study, and practicing other spiritual disciplines are valuable assets to growing your team.

Because you will be working closely with others in your team, it's important from the very beginning to work at relationship building and getting to know one another. Hosting your training events in a comfortable setting and allowing time for socializing and refreshments is a good way to start. The learning activities themselves can generally be completed in 45 to 50 minutes. Scheduling your event for 60-75 minutes will allow group members to talk informally, share information, and build community. Your hosts or the sending agency that you are working with would be great resources for recommending quality materials.

SHARING INFORMATION

In an age of instantly available information, members of your team should be able to do a significant amount of research and exploring on their own. But having a table in your meeting room that contains books about the culture you are visiting, books by authors from that culture, newspaper or magazine articles, a map of the country or area that you will visit, and other documents sets a great tone for your meeting space. The resources emphasize the importance of being as culturally intelligent as possible before leaving your own community.

Be sure to include a list on your table where team members can write down their phone number, mailing address, and email address. Make a copy of the list for each team member and encourage them to connect by sharing links, stories, pictures, and other resources they encounter. Also consider creating a closed Facebook group to build community, share resources, and remind the team of important dates and information.

GETTING TO KNOW YOUR HOSTS

One of the most important things you can do as you prepare for this trip is to build strong relationships with your hosts, or sending agency, before the trip. In nearly every session, you're asked to communicate with your hosts or sending agency. Forging a strong connection between the short-term mission team and the hosts or sending agency is of utmost importance in the Changed for Life model.

If you are working through a sending agency, it is important that you use their recommended channels of communication for connecting with your hosts. (Some of this information can be found in sending agency or newsletters or blogs.)

Here is a list of action items and interactions you'll find in the sessions:

- Session 1:** Ask your host or sending agency for help in filling out key phrases in the host language. (See Handout 1-4)
- Session 2:** Ask your host or sending agency for a video clip or statement about what God has been doing through their ministry and in their community.
- Session 3:** Fill out the description of your host destination with the help of your hosts or sending agency. (See Handout 3-1.)
- Session 4:** Contact your host or sending agency and ask for their help in filling in the information on Handout 4-3. Also ask for any other suggestions your host might make about helping your group prepare.
- Session 5:** Talk to your host or sending agency about challenges they face in the areas of material, spiritual, or relational poverty and tell them your group will be praying for

these challenges. Also, give your host prayer requests for your team while they are traveling away from home.

Session 6: The above list will be a good start for growing your relationships with your hosts and /or sending agency. But don't limit your interaction to the items suggested in the session. Here are other ways to get to know each other:

- ✦ Find a way to share video with each other if possible. You can video your team members and ask your host or sending agency to do the same, introducing you to some of the key people you will interact with on your trip. You can video some things that are representative of life in your church and community, and invite your host or sending agency to do the same. Video is a great way to get to know more about each other.
- ✦ If your team isn't too large, set up a Skype or Google Hangout conversation with some representatives from your host community or country. Get to know each other electronically before you meet face to face.
- ✦ If possible, set up email or postal communication between members of your team and people in the host community (through your sending agency if applicable). Encourage the pairs to share pictures and tell each other their stories. Encourage members of your team to share the stories they hear with others on your team. It is also not too early to begin sharing with your congregation what you are learning and communicating prayer requests to them.

Keeping Journals

Many people discover that writing down their thoughts and goals is a helpful tool both to prepare for and to remember a trip like the one you are about to take together. You can either make notebooks available for your team to use as journals or suggest they use their phones, computers, or tablets for journaling.

At the end of each session you'll find some "sentence starters" that group members can use to begin a journal entry. Assure them that they don't need to be limited by these. They can structure their journal in whatever way is most comfortable for them.

Challenge the team to use their journals to set goals and identify priorities before the trip, to continue journaling during their mission trip, and to review their journals after they return home.

Changed for Life

Many short-term missions result in amazing life changes.

- ✦ A widow in Honduras lost her house in Hurricane Mitch. She now has a house of her own and became a Christian through the work of a short-term mission team.
- ✦ A young man in Kansas found himself drifting away from his church, but through a short-term mission experience he went on to become a young leader and is excited to see where God will call him to serve next.

We know God is pleased with these stories and others like them.

There are also times when short-term mission results are not as wonderful.

- ✦ A Guatemalan builder found himself turned off to church after contact with a short-term mission group. The team he worked with broke for lunch each day but did not share any of their food with him. They also bought Cokes for themselves but not for the Guatemalan workers they labored beside.
- ✦ A young woman from California went on a short-term mission to Kenya. She returned excited, longing to pray more, give more, and get involved in missions at her church. After a few months passed, she timidly admitted that she hadn't followed through on any of those goals.

This curriculum seeks to help teams, sending agencies, and hosts design short-term mission experiences that result in participants, hosts, and communities being changed for life as they minister together. Your team will be encouraged to prepare well before leaving, to continue to interact regularly with one another during the mission trip, to maintain contact with each other after you return home, and to get involved in your own community. With intentional planning, the changes in the lives of participants will spill into the congregations and communities that they call home.

As you begin your preparations, make lots of room for prayer and praise as you discover the things God is doing through you, your team, your sending agency, and your hosts in the weeks to come.

GETTING STARTED 1

STM On-Field Preparation Planning Learning Experiences

Nine to twelve months before the trip, consult your host or sending agency about what they would like to teach your team and what things are important to them. Encourage them to outline what they think will help build a long-term relationship in the future, if that is a shared goal.

Ideas For Learning on Your Trip

Education

- ✦ Talk with a teacher or government official about education in the host location.
- ✦ Invite community members to tell you what the schools are like in the neighborhood.
- ✦ Visit a school with your hosts.

Religion

- ✦ Meet with religious leaders or active faith communities and talk about strengths and challenges they face.
- ✦ Visit a place of worship unlike your own.

Politics and Government

- ✦ The political climate in a country or city often contributes to poverty. Find out if and how that is true in the host location.
- ✦ If you're visiting a different country, take a trip to see the Congress or Presidential Palace or other important government buildings.
- ✦ Meet with congressional representatives or local community leaders who can convey how the government operates and what it is doing to help people.

Economics

- ✦ Meet with industry leaders and businesspeople who can share how they compete in a global economy.

- ✦ Ask a community member about what it's like to work in the country or community where your host is located—what jobs women do, what jobs men do, how difficult it is to find work, what the average worker is paid, and so on.
- ✦ Try learning how to do a common job in your host area, such as laying bricks, making tortillas, farming.
- ✦ Visit a local marketplace and see how people acquire goods and services.

Partner Organizations

- ✦ Visit partner organizations that support your host group. There may be space in your long-term goals to work with these organizations as well.



GETTING STARTED 2

STM On-Field Preparation Worship/Recreation Experiences

The development of your STM team's experience should primarily be the work of your sending agency or host group, but it may be helpful for you to be in touch with them about what worship and recreation experiences they would like to experience with your team. These facets of an short-term mission trip have the potential to build community and strengthen long-term relationships. It is important that, whenever possible, you give your host the opportunity to take the lead in planning for your visit.

Worship:

- ✦ Plan on worshipping with your hosts. Keep in mind that some faith traditions may be accustomed to worshipping longer than the churches you attend. Worshipping, praying, and giving thanks in your host culture's language, if it is different than your own, is a powerful experience.
- ✦ Consider taking communion together as a combined group.
- ✦ Read the Lord's Prayer together in each language represented by your hosts and your team.

Recreation:

- ✦ Allow your hosts to take the lead in planning what your team will see and do.
- ✦ If you're working with children, teach each other your favorite traditional games (ring-around-the-rosie, bubbles, chalk, hopscotch, four square, jump rope, marbles, treasure hunt, hot potato, frisbee golf, pinata, three-legged races, Bingo). You may want to bring some of these items along, but remember, another important way that you can contribute to the communities that you visit is by purchasing things like soccer balls from local vendors (it will also save you a lot of room in your luggage!).
- ✦ Watch a movie together and discuss it afterwards. (Use a version with subtitles if there are language differences in your groups.)
- ✦ Go on an outing together to a local tourist site. You may be surprised to find that some of your hosts have never been there. (Offer to pay the entrance fee if appropriate)
- ✦ Play sports together: soccer, volleyball, group games.

GETTING STARTED 3

STM On-Field Preparation
Work Project Preparation

Your STM team's work while on the field is best designed by your sending agency or host group. Here are some things to keep in mind while working on the field.

Suggestions:

- ✦ Your work project should be headed by locals from the community you're working in, not by your group. You're there to provide support, not to run things.
- ✦ Invite the local leaders to tell you how you can best help. Listen to their advice. You're only there for a week or so, so make sure you don't take over.
- ✦ If you find people doing things differently than you would, learn the new way to do them. Find people with skills you don't have, and ask if they'll teach you. If you have a skill you think they'd like to learn, offer to teach it, but do so humbly.
- ✦ If your group is going to stop for a break to have a snack or a Coke, make sure to invite the locals working with you to join you.
- ✦ Keep in mind the goals you set before coming, and make sure your work experience is helping you to reach those goals. Ask yourself how you can work in a way that is most pleasing to God.
- ✦ Before the trip, ask what materials might be helpful to bring and what would be better purchased or borrowed from the host location.
- ✦ Find out deadlines for project finances to be in. (Sending agencies often need money ahead of time so supplies can be purchased before the arrival of the STM team.)

GETTING STARTED 4

STM On-Field Preparation
Cross Cultural Awareness

Will the team be staying with host families?

- ✦ If so, staying in groups of at least two is recommended. Staying in pairs can make it less challenging to cross cultural and language barriers.
- ✦ If they will be staying with host families, ask them how they identify the host families. For example, will they be members of the local church? It will help everyone involved to understand expectations.

Host Families:

- ✦ Consider bringing along small greeting and parting gifts to express thanks for their hospitality.
- ✦ Show reciprocal hospitality by helping with meal preparation, dishwashing, or other household chores if appropriate.
- ✦ Be conscious about bedtime and wake-up expectations within the host home.
- ✦ Bring along an appropriate photograph of your family and city to share with your host family.
- ✦ If you'll be in a different culture than your own, be conscious of greetings, appropriate dress, and customs about shoes in the home.
- ✦ Keep your hosts informed of your group's plans: when you are going and coming, what meals you will be sharing with them, any needs you may have.
- ✦ Be considerate of your water usage and energy consumption.
- ✦ Take note of bathroom practices in your host community. In many countries, toilet paper is not flushed, but thrown in a waste basket.
- ✦ *Honor the security requests of your hosts.* If they tell you that it is not safe to go out after dark or to go for a run through their community in the morning, please respect their wisdom.

Food in Other Countries:

- ✦ Familiarize yourself with the host culture's dining habits, especially religious and dietary needs.
- ✦ The main meal in most cultures is midday, when in North America it is after the work day (dinner).
- ✦ Some cultures take an afternoon tea. Some communities find it offensive when visitors opt to work through tea time rather than receiving their hospitality and joining them for conversation.
- ✦ Try to at least sample unfamiliar foods; doing so communicates respect.
- ✦ Be aware that the order of courses in another culture may be different.
- ✦ Host cultures may not use silverware to eat meals as North Americans are used to. Learn to use your hands, chopsticks, or whatever is appropriate.
- ✦ Try an international food festival to practice ahead of time, or visit a restaurant that features your host culture's cuisine.
- ✦ View these tips for food and water safety from the Center for Disease Control <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/food-water-safety>

GETTING STARTED 5

STM On-Field Preparation Travel Details

*Make sure that your host gives a thorough on-field security orientation to your team on your first day there.

General Travel Safety:

- ✦ Leave copies of documents and itinerary with family members. Carry an additional photocopy in a separate space of your luggage or scan and email to yourself. Documents to copy: itinerary, passport identity page, visa, airline tickets, driver's license, insurance papers, emergency contact phone numbers, and credit cards you plan to bring.
- ✦ For an extensive list of [safety tips](#) including: what to take, what to leave behind, safety on streets, hotels, public transportation, driving, handling money, and avoiding legal difficulties
- ✦ Be familiar with the safety guidelines of the sending agency you are working with.
- ✦ Separate your sources of money, so if you experience loss or theft you will still have funds at your disposal.
- ✦ Carry all important papers and documents on you at all times, or as advised by the host or sending agency. (Some hosts prefer that you carry a copy and keep your passports locked in a safe at their facility.)
- ✦ Practice situational awareness and be alert whenever you travel.
- ✦ If you're traveling to another country, record your travel information using the U.S. State Department's [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program](#) or the Canadian government's [Registration of Canadians Abroad](#) page.
- ✦ If there are members of your team that are citizens of other countries, be sure to check that it is possible for them to travel to the country you are visiting. Even if the rest of your team does not need a visa because of their citizenship, citizens of other countries may be required to have them.
- ✦ It is important that each member of your team has travel medical insurance that includes coverage for emergency medical evacuation. Travel medical insurance is quite affordable, and sending agencies can offer links of trusted insurance agencies for purchasing it online.

PASSPORTS:

United States

- ✦ Check with your sending agency or on your country's travel website to find out if your team will need visas.
- ✦ Apply well in advance for your passport.
 1. Routine service can take 4-6 weeks.
 2. Expedited service can take 2-3 weeks.
- ✦ Adult application fee is \$140 for first-time application and renewal.
- ✦ Passports must be renewed every 10 years for those over 16.
- ✦ Minors must renew their passport every five years.
- ✦ Find a passport acceptance facility [near you](#).

Canada

- ✦ Check with your sending agency or on your country's travel website to find out if your team will need visas.
- ✦ [Applying for Passports](#) (Usual response time: 20 days) (Express: 2-9 business days)
- ✦ Fee: Five-year passport, \$120; 10-year passport, \$160
- ✦ [Travel Advice and Advisories](#)
- ✦ [Travel Abroad Information](#)

Immunizations for Travel Abroad:

- ✦ Before traveling abroad, visit your doctor to make sure you are in good health and know your limitations.
- ✦ Visit the website of the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) or the [Public Health Agency of Canada](#). There you can enter your destination and specific details to receive a list of suggested immunizations.
- ✦ Find doctors and hospitals near your host destination [here](#).
- ✦ View these ideas for packing a [group travel health kit](#).
- ✦ View these [tips](#) for avoiding insect bites.

Consult your host or partner agency to ask questions about specific safety concerns, packing needs, and any suggested immunizations.

GETTING STARTED 6

STM On-Field Preparation Packing List

Packing needs will vary depending on your destination.

Consult your sending agency or host for a specific packing list.

Suggestions for what to pack in a carry-on bag:

- ✦ sunscreen
- ✦ sunglasses
- ✦ culturally appropriate clothing
- ✦ contact lens/glasses (bring a back-up pair)
- ✦ toiletries (meeting [TSA guidelines](#) or [CATSA guidelines](#) for carry-ons)
- ✦ personal medications in original pharmacy containers
- ✦ hand sanitizer
- ✦ flashlight with extra batteries
- ✦ quick-drying towel
- ✦ water bottle
- ✦ rain jacket or poncho
- ✦ hat or bandana
- ✦ mosquito repellent (as long as it is 3.4 oz. or less)
- ✦ wet wipes
- ✦ work shoes
- ✦ flip-flops
- ✦ plastic bags for dirty clothing
- ✦ a sheet, small blanket or small pillow

