



# CHANGED FOR LIFE

# CHANGED FOR LIFE

Session One: Before the Trip

**LEADER/TEAM**

MATERIALS AND HANDOUTS

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

# Session One: Before the Trip

## CHANGED FOR LIFE

### Goals

- ✦ Participants will learn that the purpose of the trip is not the trip itself, but what God begins to do in and through their lives afterwards.
- ✦ Participants will learn about the dynamics of a mission experience that works with “eyes wide open.”
- ✦ Participants will set goals for their mission experience that are focused on life change after the trip.

### Prepare

- ✦ Read Session 1.
- ✦ Watch the Session 1 Video.
- ✦ Make copies of Session 1 Handouts.
- ✦ If the language of the host location is different than your own, research key phrases in your host language (fill in your copy of Handout 1.4 as you prepare). Consult your hosts or sending agency for assistance.

### Materials

- ✦ Handouts for Session 1 (paper or electronic)
- ✦ Video for Session 1
- ✦ Computer or projector for watching videos
- ✦ Newsprint or white board and markers
- ✦ Pens and pencils
- ✦ Bible

## OPEN

Time: 10 minutes

If this is your first time meeting together, make a point of greeting each person as he or she enters. If you think people may not know each other's names, make name tags available and ask each person to wear one. Place the information about your host location on a table near coffee, juice, and other refreshments. Give group members a few minutes to look through the information on the table and to talk informally before you bring the group together.

Open by praying for each person in the room. Pray that the relationship with your hosts will grow and deepen even before you arrive on your mission trip. Ask that your group and the host group will be changed for life as a result of your time together.

Unless you all know each other well, you may want to include some kind of icebreaker activity at the beginning of this session. Here are a few to choose from:

- ✦ Ask participants to introduce themselves and tell what drew them to this short-term mission trip.
- ✦ Ask participants to say their name again and tell the group one unusual thing about themselves—something that most people don't know.
- ✦ Divide into pairs and give the pairs a few minutes to talk together. Explain that you will be asking them to introduce each other to the group.

After introductions, break participants up into two groups. Have each group read and talk about one of the two case studies in your handouts (Handout 1-1 and 1-2). Give groups about 5 minutes to read and react to the case study. Bring the group back together and have one person from each group summarize the case study and the group's reflections.

## EXPLORE

Time: 25 minutes

Comment that in the cases you just discussed and in many other trips like them, much of the focus is on what the STM team does *during the trip*. We measure success only in terms of how many sick people were given medicine, how many people were evangelized, and how many

houses were built. But God often uses trips like the one you will engage in to accomplish things we never even imagined that may extend beyond the trip itself.

Ask the group to listen reflectively as you read Matthew 13:3-9:

*A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. Whoever has ears, let them hear. (NIV)*

Invite some quick reactions about parallels the group members see between this parable and what we know about short-term missions. Invite them time to dream about the ways in which God might use the upcoming trip.

- ✦ How might the words you say, the relationships you build, and your actions be like the seed the sower cast over many kinds of soil?

Invite the group to think about the parable as they watch the Session 1 Video together. After the video, invite the group's response to some of the issues the video uncovered:

- ✦ What are some examples given in the video of short-term missions going poorly?
- ✦ What suggestions did the video make for transforming the trip into a life-changing experience for all involved?

Challenge the group to think about what some of these truths and principles about mission trips—including the parable of the Sower—mean for your own trip together.

Divide participants into pairs or groups of three and ask them to think of some initial ideas for what a *Changed for Life* relationship might look like—aspects that might make this truly a life-transforming experience. Tell them to use Handout 1-3 for this purpose and try to list at least three ideas.

After 3-5 minutes, ask each pair to report their ideas to the larger group. Compile a list on newsprint or white board. You may want to spend a bit of time prioritizing the list. Ask group members to record the top five ideas your group agrees on in their handout.

## CONNECT

15 minutes

One of the ideas group members may have listed is becoming familiar with the language of the culture you will be visiting. Even if they didn't, they will appreciate and benefit from working through Handout 1-4 together. Invite any group members who know the language to help the group fill in the blanks (but be sure to have your own copy filled in beforehand as a backup). Practice some of the words and phrases together and challenge group members to continue their journey to learn this language in the weeks and months to come.

## CLOSE

10 minutes

Close your session today in prayer. Pray that in preparation, during the mission trip, and after the mission trip, a deep and lasting partnership might form between the STM team, and the host group. Pray for God to open your eyes to see the ways that relationships can be built and strengthened.

### Option: Journal

You will be going on a journey together. But this will also be a personal journey for participants. You may want to distribute notebooks (or encourage participants to record their thoughts on their smartphones, computers, or tablets) and invite them to keep a journal of their thoughts, experiences, and hopes as they plan for this mission experience. Each week, consider providing several sentence starters and giving them time to write in their journals during your time together. Challenge the group to also list their weekly personal goals for preparation.

Some suggestions for the first session:

When I think about this trip, my biggest concern is . . .

The gifts I bring to this group are . . .

This week I will pray that . . .

### Option: Information

Draw the attention of the STM team to the items you placed on the table before the meeting today. Invite them to add items to the display as they discover articles, books, and other helpful information about the site you will visit on the STM trip.

Also, share e-mail addresses during this first session and encourage the STM team to e-mail the group any links they discover that will add to the helpful information you're gathering together. Or consider starting a closed Facebook group to interact and share resources.

### Option: For Teams Traveling Domestically

Socioeconomic and cultural differences between your team and the community that you visit may not be clearly evident. Your group is encouraged to do the case study activities, and then to discuss what cultural and socioeconomic differences might be present between your group and the people you work with at your host site.

One way to do this would be by encouraging your group to read and discuss an article that helps them to identify characteristics of their own culture and region, and to identify the differences within your country. Here are two possible articles to use to spark such a conversation: [American Culture: Traditions and Customs in the United States](#) or [Diversity in Canada: An Overview](#).

# HANDOUT: SESSION 1.1

## Case Study 1: Serving with Eyes Wide Open

The Misquito people in Honduras have survived for over a hundred years by planting rice using a slash-and-burn method. They cut down brush, let it dry, and then start it on fire. A few days later they scatter seeds over the area and come back in a few months to harvest the rice among the weeds.

A short-term mission group visited Honduras. Since one of their members had recently earned a B.A. in Agricultural Science from the University of Iowa, the group spent their week with the Hondurans trying to train them in a better way of growing rice.

In doing this, the team failed to remember or understand that the slash-and-burn system has worked for over a hundred years and that insects and weeds are killed by burning. The team was also ignorant about the floods that frequently cover the land and how weeds can prevent rice from being washed away or drowned. And they didn't realize that the time it would take to cultivate, plant, and weed the rice patch would take away precious time needed for fishing.

If the Misquitos people had implemented this group's ideas, they might very well have harvested more rice. But they would probably have gone hungry much of the year due to a lack of dried fish.

1. What does this case tell us about working with people in another language and culture?

2. How can we be the best representatives of Christ that we can be in another culture?

3. At the same time, how can we learn everything that God wants to teach us in a new culture?

## HANDOUT: SESSION 1.2

### Case Study 2: Serving with Eyes Wide Open

The Lenca Indians in Honduras have mixed Christian teachings with traditional religion. They were taught that soon after creation, God told Adam to go and plant his fields. When Adam began clearing away the trees and weeds, they began to bleed and cry. Adam then went back to God and told him he didn't want to disobey, but it hurt him to see the plants in pain. God told Adam if he made a small sacrifice for forgiveness each year for the violence he would inflict on the trees and plants, they would not bleed or cry out.

When missionaries first arrived and saw Lencas performing sacrifices, they told them it was a pagan practice that should be stopped because it was not pleasing to God. Over time, sacrifice had become a key means by which they understood that God was pleased when they respected and protected the creation. The missionaries did not replace that practice with teachings that continued to emphasize God's love for creation. An unintended consequence of stopping the sacrifice was that deforestation exploded in the region.

1. What does this case tell us about working with people in another language and culture?
2. How can we be the best representatives of Christ that we can be in another culture?
3. At the same time, how can we learn everything that God wants to teach us in a new culture?



## **HANDOUT: SESSION 1.3**

Ideas for a Changed for Life partnership:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

Group Ideas for a Changed for Life partnership

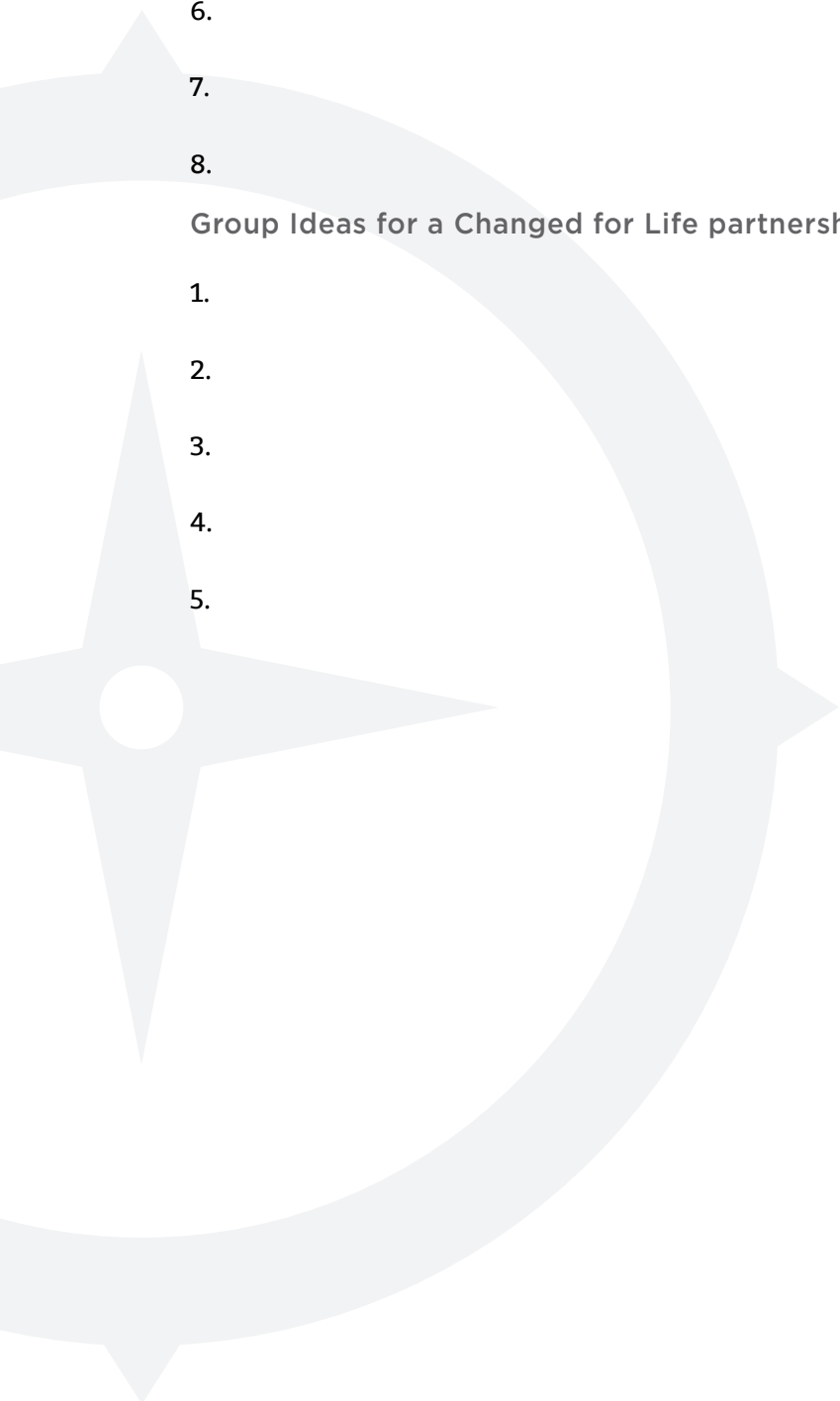
1.

2.

3.

4.

5.



# HANDOUT: SESSION 1.4

## Host Language

Hello \_\_\_\_\_

My name is \_\_\_\_\_

Goodbye \_\_\_\_\_

Where is the bathroom? \_\_\_\_\_

How are you? \_\_\_\_\_

Help \_\_\_\_\_

Please \_\_\_\_\_

Yes/ No \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you \_\_\_\_\_

Do you speak English? \_\_\_\_\_

I'm sorry \_\_\_\_\_

I do not understand \_\_\_\_\_

Excuse me \_\_\_\_\_

Other words/phrases specific to the work you will be doing:

