



A GATHERING PLACE
FOR SHORT-TERM MISSION ARTICLES,
RESOURCES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Training and Preparation for Missions

By Tory Ruark, COO of SOE

The age-old question of short-term missions is, “is the mission trip for the goer or the receiver?” Raise your hand if you’re as tired of this question as I am! It posits a false dichotomy. As if short-term mission trips can only be for one person! If you haven’t seen [the MISTM Grid](#) yet, check it out! It does a great job of expanding your vision on those involved in the mission process as well as the process itself!

While the spiritual growth—or discipleship—of the goer can’t take priority over all things, I wonder if we sometimes miss the mark when we consider it. Often, we limit our thoughts to the impact of the trip itself and what comes afterwards, without considering the many months before. *What if we believe God could transform the goer through our training and preparation? Could the spiritual transformation of the goer actually become the best gift you could give to your host and those whom you serve?*

If you’re reading this article, I would guess that I don’t need to convince you of the importance of pre-trip training. In fact, I would wager that many of you already do a lot for this, but I wonder if some of us need to work smarter not harder? Or at least more intentionally. Take a moment to think about your pre-trip preparation—and perhaps your during- and post-trip process too! Consider these ideas:

1. **Begin with the end in mind.** Think about what you want your goers to know, be able to do, and be like.
2. **Plan backwards.** Now that you know how you want to affect your goer, work backwards from the trip (or forwards from the trip if considering post-trip) and make a plan for what you’ll do.
3. **Don’t reinvent the wheel!** You don’t have to come up with everything yourself. In fact, you probably won’t have time to create everything you need and still complete all your other responsibilities. Look for great resources and learn from others!
4. **Make your information actionable!** It’s not enough to give information, give opportunities to apply it! Transformation will take place when people experience God at work in their lives. You don’t have to wait for the trip to set up opportunities for spiritual transformation!
5. **Evaluate and assess.** Never stop learning and growing. The fact is, sometimes we don’t know what we don’t know. You might have done your very best work but keep learning and growing. Keep finding out about the experience of others and improving!

One of the keys to making all this happen is finding a few resources that can help you work smarter not harder. They take our learning and put it into action. Check out our resources page for some

great recommendations and take special note of our webinar, "[Practical Tools for Discipleship and Follow-Through](#)" for demonstrations of specific resources that many people have found useful. Do you need help? Let us know and we'd be happy to consult with you!