



DEBRIEFING YOUR TRIP & SHARING YOUR STORY

Whether this is the first or fiftieth mission trip your church has done, it has the potential to be a life-changing experience for you and your youth. You will have new experiences, see new things, and perhaps even learn something more about God, yourself and the world around you. We hope that your journey doesn't stop here but that you will take what you learned home and integrate it into your lives.

DEBRIEFING

It is important to debrief your mission trip. Taking time to debrief the mission trip with your students will increase the value of their experience and help to stretch what they learned beyond the one-week trip. Without time to process and debrief your trip, the return to life at home could become both frustrating and overwhelming. Debriefing your trip together as a group also helps you discover and remember the special things God taught you while you were away. Our hope is that by debriefing, your group will find practical ways to bring their trip home with them in a way that impacts their own church and community.

Debriefing can be done in a variety of ways and done either as one big event or a couple smaller ones. We have created a one-time session to guide you through the debriefing process so that you, as the Trip Leader, can put just a little more intentionality into what happens after your trip. It only takes about an hour and a half, but the benefits to your group will last much longer.

FACILITATOR

Preparation for this meeting:

- Select or ask five volunteers to share their 2- Minute Story with one picture from their trip. Plan for how you will project the picture for your whole group to see.
- Choose and prepare small group facilitators (enough for small groups of about five participants each). See the notes for these leaders provided in this packet.
- Make a plan for worship for the evening, including assigning a worship leader and songs for the evening.
- Make a few posters with the heading "Continuing the Journey" and get Post-it notes and pencils for the "What's Next" activity.
- Create a slideshow from group pictures.

STUDENTS & LEADERS

Ways your participants should prepare for this session:

- Complete the "Share Your Story" questions provided (pages 3-4 of this document).
- Prepare the 2-Minute Story provided below.
- If selected, provide one picture to show while they share their 2-Minute Story.
- Email pictures to you (or whoever is making the slideshow).

SAMPLE SCHEDULE

WELCOME (15 MINUTES)

- Thank the group for coming and share the purposes for the evening: to unpack the mission trip (what the trip was all about) and to talk about ways to continue the journey we have started back at home (what's next for our group).
- 2-Minute Stories
 - 5 participants each share their 2-Minute Story with one picture representative of the trip projected as they do.

SMALL GROUP DEBRIEFING – WHAT HAPPENED (35 MINUTES)

Divide participants into groups of around five students. Assign a facilitator to each group to get students talking about their mission trip experience.

- See Facilitator Notes (page 5) for tips on leading small groups and discussion questions.
- Give the Small Group Discussion Format (page 6) to each of your facilitators. It will help them guide their small group time.

WORSHIP (13-18 MINUTES)

Start by singing two favorite songs from the mission trip as a group.

- Introduce the idea of continuing what was learned.
 - Give participants the chance to reflect and write on Post-it notes their ideas of how God's love for them can grow in their lives and be shared with others.
 - How can we continue the journey? Is it serving people at church? Or maybe assisting a community organization that is already up and running but needs some extra energy and encouragement?
 - Remember what your group talked about during the mission trip in Church Group Time or on the van ride home and build off that.
 - Play 1-2 reflective song(s) in the background while the group is writing and posting their Post-its on "Continuing the Journey" posters.

DISCUSSION (15-20 MINUTES)

Hold a brainstorming session with everyone to envision what's next for your group. Review some of the ideas/thoughts they wrote on the Post-it notes. Keep your eye out for students who are ready to help and be activators with the rest of the group. Also, think strategically about how you can incorporate future conversations based on how this one goes.

- How can God's love for you make a difference in your life?
- Now that we're back home, what are some ways we can live the lives God intended for us?
- How can we be invested in the well-being of others? What does that look like practically?
- How do we keep sharing our stories?

CLOSING/SLIDESHOW (10 MINUTES)

Share Your Story

PREPARING YOUR STORY

Although your weeklong mission trip is over, God is still moving in and through you! Think about how this experience has changed you.

How has it changed...

...your understanding of God?

...your understanding of yourself and how God sees you?

...your view of the world?

What have you learned about serving?

What have you learned about following Jesus?

REMEMBER YOUR STORY

What are a few small things you can do to keep fresh in your mind what you learned during your trip?

The 2-Minute Story

Often you will be asked to share about your mission experience – perhaps at youth group, a family gathering, at the lunch table or even in a class. While people are genuinely interested in what you have to say, these are not usually the people who want to hear the play-by-play of what you experienced, who you encountered or how you were changed. Challenge yourself to come up with a 2-minute description of your trip. Share one meaningful story and what God taught you through that story instead of rushing through all the details of the week. You might determine what you want to include in your 2-minute story by thinking through the following questions:

1. What did you learn from people in the community?
2. Whom/what do you specifically want to pray for after you return home?
3. What did you learn about yourself this week?
4. What new things did you learn about God?
5. How are you a different person now compared to when you first signed up for this mission trip?
6. How do you want your youth group to be involved in service at home?
7. When you think of your mission trip, what is one “snapshot” that comes to mind?

Small Group Discussion

FACILITATOR NOTES

We recommend small groups of five or so, plus a facilitator who may or may not have been on the trip. Each facilitator will meet for about 30 minutes with their small group, using the following information as their guide.

1. **Your role: to ask questions and listen.** You need not be an expert in short-term missions, missions leadership or any particular cultural group. You simply need to ask and listen.
2. **Use the Small-Group Discussion Format provided as a guide.**
3. **Follow the conversation's flow.** Listen to what comes up in discussion and ask basic follow-up questions.

Some questions to help students go deeper:

- What do you think about that?
- How did that affect you?
- What did you notice about that?
- How are you dealing with that now?
- What did you sense God doing in you?
- Tell me about a memory that will stay with you for a while.
- What stood out to you about....?

4. **Pay attention to who is talking.**
 - Manage talkative students. They can be helpful, but they can also dominate the conversation.
 - Draw out quieter students, if possible. Ask them direct questions.
 - You may have a student who is closed off (not just quiet) and doesn't want to participate in the discussion. Since this is such a short time, you probably won't be able to help them let their guard down. Be sure to let the youth leader know if you think they need to follow up.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION FORMAT

Team Processing (10 minutes)

- Introduce yourself and what you do (if participants don't know you).
- Small Group Introductions – Share your name and favorite YouthWorks meal.
- How did it go with your group (meaning your church group)?
 1. What did you most appreciate about your group?
 2. What did you find most difficult about your group?
 3. What did you learn about yourself from your group?
 4. What will you really miss about your group being together in [site name]?

Ministry Reflections (10 minutes)

- What did you learn about ministry?
 1. What/who made the biggest impact on you?
 2. What surprised you about ministry in [site name]?
 3. What thought(s) or question(s) have stuck with you since you've been back?
 4. How do you think God will use this trip to shape your future (where you live, where you spend your money and on what, how you treat people, your career)?

Coming Home Reflections (10 minutes)

- How was your first (week or however long it has been) back home?
 1. What have you enjoyed the most?
 2. What things have most gotten on your nerves?
 3. What do you anticipate others' responses will be to changes in you?
 4. How are you personally going to continue on this journey?
 5. Who can you look to for support at home?

Close in prayer for the group.

CELEBRATING

It is worthwhile to celebrate your trip and the experiences and insights received from it. Invite parents, mission trip sponsors and members of your church community to be part of the celebrating through sharing stories and pictures with them.

WAYS TO CELEBRATE/SHARE WITH THE CHURCH

- Picture party: Everyone brings their pictures and showcases them. Invite members of the church to come and see pictures and hear stories from the trip.
- With your team or the youth group, show a slideshow, eat popcorn and share stories from the trip.
- Create a mission trip bulletin board that includes pictures and stories from the trip. Place this in a hallway or common gathering space where people will be likely to see it.
- Share a short video/testimonials in front of the congregation; lead worship with songs sung on the trip.
- Host a thank-you dinner for sponsors, making a meal reminiscent of your trip.
- Make a mission trip scrapbook: Each youth gets 1–2 pages to put in pictures, write down stories and share thoughts/experiences. Keep it in the youth room so everyone can look at it. Share the scrapbook with the congregation.
- Reunion party: Include pictures, celebration, stories and/or a time of remembrance.

WAYS TO CONTINUE WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED

We hope that your youth's lives have, in some way, changed through their mission trip experience. They may even be excited to continue their service right in your own community. Tap into that excitement and zeal right away. Look for ways to make service a part of their life in your own community. We have given you a few ideas, but brainstorm some of your own ideas with your youth, as well.

- Once a month (or more), go to a local assisted living facility. Play games, sing or just visit with residents. You could turn it into an adopt-a-grandparent program by establishing consistent relationships between youth and residents.
- Make regular visits to the homes of people from your church who are elderly or disabled. Help with yard work or cleaning, go shopping with/for them, watch a movie or play games together.
- Find nonprofit organizations operating in your community (shelters, soup kitchens, thrift stores, etc.) and see what kind of volunteer needs they have. Give youth options and ownership over which ministry, or ministries, you partner with.
- Use the ideas your youth come up with during your debriefing meeting.