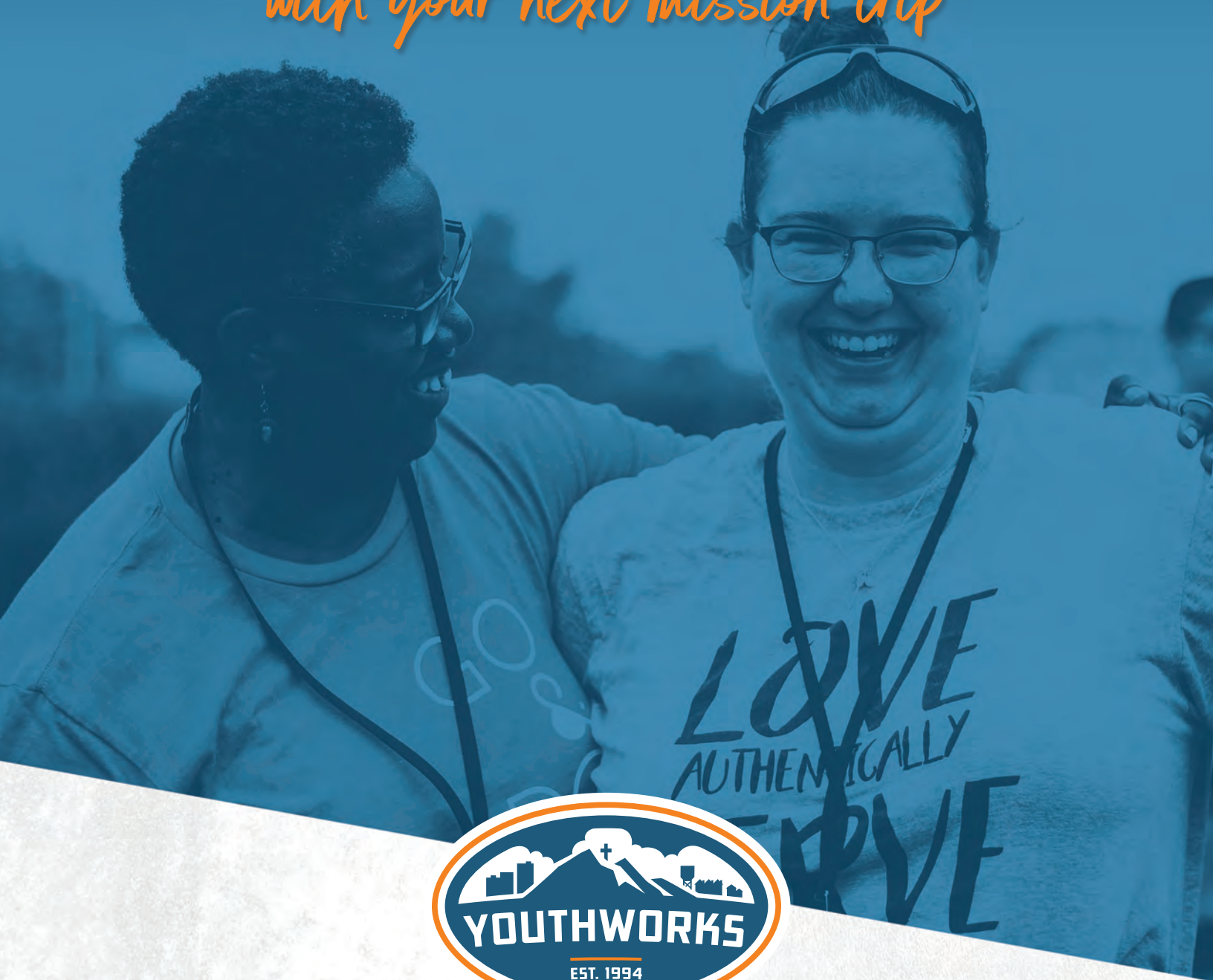


# Engaging Parents

*with your next mission trip*



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# INTRODUCTION

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This resource was created with the belief that parents play an irreplaceable role in the lives of their students. The amount of time the average parent spends with their children, even through high school, is significantly more than that of a youth worker. That's why good youth ministry includes engaging, encouraging, and empowering parents. We hope this resource aids you in doing just that!

**This guidebook was meant to be used well before your next mission trip!** Being intentional in the ways you engage parents through your next mission trip takes preparation and planning. You can maximize this content by using it to resource parents and make mission trip plans early.

This guidebook is divided into three chapters focusing on before, during and after your mission trip. Each chapter includes ideas for engaging parents, prep and processing questions for you, and a parent guide to help parents think more deeply about the upcoming trip.

There are a lot of ways you could use this resource, but here's our suggestion:

- **Read each chapter on your own or with other adult leaders.**  
Each chapter is meant to spark your imagination for how best to engage parents before, during, and after your trip. They are short and to the point, focused on really practical ideas to help you see what is possible.
- **Reflect with the Prep and Processing Questions.**  
Spend a few minutes responding to the prep and processing questions to help think through the application for your ministry. Work through them on your own first, and then use them to take intentional action steps.
- **Resource parents with the Parent Guides.**  
This is where the processing meets practical application. Use the Parent Guides to help parents gain a new vision for how they can process the experience and involve themselves in the mission trip, even while staying home.

Thanks for caring about parents and families. We hope this guidebook helps you deepen your upcoming mission trip and strengthen your youth ministry.



## - CHAPTER 1 -

# Preparing Parents Before Your Mission Trip

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You've probably never heard of Clifford Charlesworth, Gerald Griffin and Gene Kranz. And even after finding out who they were, you probably won't remember their names.

It's because we shine a spotlight on the people who go! That's why we know names like Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin—because they went to the moon! And we forget Cliff, Gerry and Gene who were equally instrumental in the Apollo 11 mission, but stayed on the ground.

On your next mission trip, you'll spend a lot of time with the people who go, but as you prepare, don't forget your ground crew. Don't forget parents! They are instrumental to the mission.

Here are three ways you can prepare parents to be great at their job of sending.

### 1. COMMUNICATE LOGISTICS CLEARLY

This is hopefully the one that you skim over, thinking, "Yes! I do that already!" It's because you kinda need to communicate with parents if you want their students to join the trip. But even if you already communicate lots of details, consider if there are any details you're missing.

Here are three logistical areas of the trip you want to make sure to include:

- **Times and Places:** This is basic. Tell parents where you're headed, when you'll leave, and when you'll return.
- **Costs and Fundraising Opportunities:** Whenever you communicate the cost, follow it quickly with info on any opportunities to raise funds. This will help keep parents and students from dismissing the trip because of the fee.
- **Meetings and Expectations:** From the beginning, help parents and students understand that they aren't just committing to the trip, but to the prep, follow-up, and other expectations that go along with it.



## 2. CAST VISION

Here's a multiple-choice questions for youth leaders: *If you are with your youth group and run out of gas on the side of the road, do you...*

- A. Flag down a vehicle.
- B. Call for help.
- C. Cast vision.

The answer is C. No matter the situation, it's always C! Always cast vision.

The reality, of course, is that casting vision does not replace a solid plan, but it certainly does augment it. So go ahead, make great mission trip plans, but don't miss the important step of communicating that plan in a way that paints a picture that both students and parents can follow.

To cast vision is to convey meaning and significance. Your job is to choose a really meaningful experience, then get parents onboard by telling them about it. Be creative and thoughtful in your approach. It isn't hard, but it does take intentionality.

Here are three easy ways to cast vision with parents:

- **Share why.** Think through the most meaningful aspects of your trip—the service, the learning, the team-building—and share the bigger picture of why those things will matter for their student.
- **Invite stories.** If you have students who have been on this trip or similar trips, have them share stories about why those trips were meaningful. Whether it's in person or in writing, help parents see why this trip mattered for another student.
- **Show pictures.** They speak a thousand words, right? And nothing supports a good story like good pictures. Choose pictures that show the team-building and service you know students will experience.

## 3. INVITE PARENT PARTICIPATION

From the very beginning, viewing parents as partners in the mission trip experience will strengthen your relationships with families and, potentially, ease some of the preparation pressure.

Let parents know that they are a welcome part of what's going to happen with their students, even though they are staying home. Look at the opportunities you have to involve parents in what happens before the trip.



Here are three simple ways you might open the door for parent participation in mission trip prep:

- **Prayer support:** Early on, provide a list of prayer requests parents can use to lift up the trip well before students load the vans.
- **Help with meetings:** Beyond pickup and drop-off, ask parents to help you put on meetings by providing snacks or a home to meet in.
- **A strong send-off:** Plan a send-off that involved parents' participation and prayers. Potentially have each student and parent share their hopes for the trip.

A successful mission trip is one that doesn't just prep the travelers, but gets the ground crew ready too. When we help parents prepare for the trip, we not only strengthen the experience for students but also expand the impact to those who do the sending.



## - ADULT LEADER -

# PREP & PROCESSING

*Use the following prompts to think through how this chapter applies directly to your ministry and what your next steps should be to engage the parents of your students.*

1. What logistical information do you need to make sure to communicate with parents? (i.e., times and places, costs and fundraising opportunities, meetings and expectations)
2. What's the vision behind this trip? Why should students go?
3. What creative methods will you use to communicate the vision for the trip with parents?
4. What are some ways you want to open the door for parent participation before the trip?
5. Look over what you've written on this page. What other creative ideas might you implement to connect with parents before the trip? Who could be helpful to you as you seek to connect with parents?

*Take some time to pray for the parents of your students. Pray both that they would be good supporters of their students as they prepare, go and return from their trip—and also that they would be impacted through their role as senders for this trip.*

*Use the Parent Guides throughout this guidebook to help parents maximize their role as senders before, during, and after the trip.*



## - PARENT GUIDE -

# 5 THINGS PARENTS CAN DO BEFORE THE MISSION TRIP

*Even though you probably aren't going on the trip, you play an important part in helping your student prepare for this experience! Take time to read each of the following ways you can support your student. After you've read, write a few specific ideas under each for what you could do to help your student prepare for their upcoming mission trip.*

### 1. KNOW THE DETAILS.

Take time to understand what will happen on the trip. Get a good context for what types of service and learning your student will be doing. This will help guide the way you support your student.

### 2. GET CURIOUS.

More than knowing what they'll be doing, take time to interview your teenager about why they are going and what they hope to do on the trip. Ask them what they're excited about, who they're looking forward to spending time with and if there's anything they're nervous about. Make it the topic of a family dinner or a chat over coffee.

### 3. BE SUPPORTIVE.

Look for ways to help your student as they prepare. Help them think through what steps they need to take, and offer encouragement for the experience they are stepping into. And of course, pray for them as they prepare.

### 4. OFFER ASSISTANCE.

Beyond offering to help your student, you can also look for ways to support the team. Encourage other parents to help their kids sign up, offer to help with a fundraising event, or open up your home for a team meeting. Ask the trip leader about ways you can lend a hand.

### 5. SEND WELL.

Think through how you can send off your child and their mission trip team well. Take time to pray together as a family the night before they depart, pack an encouraging note in their bag and stick around to wave goodbye as they head out. Sending well can help build students' expectation for what this trip could be in their lives.



## - CHAPTER 2 -

# Engaging Parents

## During Your Mission Trip

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Parents have a HUGE role in the lives of students and their influence will typically far outweigh that of any youth worker. Even so, you don't really want to take every parent on your next mission trip—which works out, because you probably don't have enough van seats anyhow!

***So how do we as youth workers help parents engage in the mission trip in meaningful ways?***

Here are three simple ways you can help parents engage during your next mission trip even though they're staying home:

### 1. EQUIP PARENTS WITH PRAYER.

It's simple but big. Ask parents to pray for the trip! But go one step further than asking: Equip them to pray! There are a couple ways you can do this.

Before the trip begins, send parents a list of prayer concerns. Include prompts like team dynamics, safety, good connections with the community, and opened eyes and hearts of students. You might even get creative and invite parents to pray for different things each day.

During the trip, you could send out prayer requests, asking parents to pray for specific concerns that arise. Of course, be careful that you don't create concern on the part of parents. Be wise about what you share and how you share it with people back home during the trip.

### 2. ENGAGE PARENTS WITH UPDATES.

Whether it's a Facebook page, a text group, or an email list, get parents' info and send them occasional updates during the trip. Be creative and strategic with what you share. Include pictures, a quick summary, and prayer requests.



This is a great task to delegate to a student or another leader, but take the time to read messages before they are posted or sent to parents. This can be a good opportunity to practice respectful story-sharing that promotes the dignity of those you serve in the community. If you are planning on sharing updates during the trip, make sure you have a solid plan in place before heading out.

The great part of sharing stories with parents and other supporters is that they'll be able to experience a small piece of what happens in real time. This will encourage better questions and deeper processing after the trip.

### 3. CHALLENGE PARENTS WITH PARALLEL EXPERIENCES.

Although parents won't come on the trip, you can encourage them to stretch, grow, and engage during the same timeframe as their teenagers. There are two big areas you can do this in:

First, give parents some of the same biblical material students will be engaging with during the trip. Invite parents to do the same devotions, read the same passages and answer the same questions as students each day. If you're creating your own materials, it might mean taking a few minutes to tweak the content in ways that make sense for someone who is not on a mission trip.

The second area you can challenge parents in is service. Ask parents to step out of their comfort zones to serve at home while their student is serving away from home. It might be volunteering at a local organization or simply going out of their way to serve in their daily context.

When you challenge parents to learn and serve in parallel ways to their students, you enable mutual processing between parents and teenagers after the trip.

#### **And here's some good news:**

If you're going on a YouthWorks trip, there's already a Parent Processing Guide created for you! After signing into the dashboard as a Trip Leader, you can find it on the "Prepare Your Church" page under the "Preparing Your Parents" section.

While you probably won't invite all your students' parents on your next mission trip, you can equip, engage and challenge them with just a little intentionality and preparation. Don't miss the opportunity to expand the reach of your next service experience and deepen its impact by engaging parents.



## - ADULT LEADER -

# PREP & PROCESSING

*Use the following prompts to think through how this chapter applies directly to your ministry and what your next steps should be to engage the parents of your students.*

1. What advantages do you see in engaging parents during the mission trip?
2. What are some specific prayer concerns you have during your upcoming trip?
3. What are a couple ways you want to share those requests with parents so they can pray for you during the mission trip?
4. What's your plan for communicating with parents and other supporters during the trip? Who do you need to ask to help you with that plan?
5. How do you want to challenge parents with a parallel experience during the mission trip?



## - PARENT GUIDE -

# 4 THINGS PARENTS CAN DO FROM HOME DURING THE MISSION TRIP

*We hope our students are challenged and changed by a meaningful mission trip experience, but what if we could experience some of that same change from back home?! As your student serves in another community, here are four ways you can challenge yourself to have a parallel experience back home. Not only will these things grow your own faith, they'll help create a two-sided conversation with your student when he or she returns home. After you read each of the following, write down a few practical steps you can take during your student's mission trip.*

- 1. PRAY!** Set aside time to pray each day. If you know your student's schedule, you could time your prayer at different points during the day—like when your student will be heading to service sites in the morning or processing their experience at the end of the day. Pray for God's provision and pray against the things that could distract from the experience.
- 2. LEARN.** More than service, mission trips give students the opportunity to learn about a place and its people. Look for ways to learn about the place your student is serving, perhaps through something as simple as a Wikipedia search. If you know your student is learning about a certain issue (e.g., homelessness, food sustainability, education) or a certain culture, look into those topics. Taking time to learn now will give you something to talk about with your student when they return.
- 3. GROW.** During the mission trip, your student will have the opportunity to grow closer to God, perhaps through some new experiences and interactions. Look for out-of-the-ordinary ways you can grow in your own relationship with God. Step up your devotional practice, attend a service at a different church, or gather with others to talk about Scripture. If you know what passages your student will be looking at during the trip, read those same passages and look for application in your everyday life. It's valuable for students to hear about the faith journey of their parents, so look forward to both hearing and sharing about spiritual growth after the trip.
- 4. EXPERIENCE.** All week, your student will be stepping out of their comfort zones to serve and love others. Look for parallel experiences you can have in your own community. You might look for a place to volunteer one or more times during the week your student is away. Or you might do something as simple as keeping an awareness of ways you can step out of your comfort zone to serve the people you encounter each day. Having a corresponding service experience with your student during the same timeframe can create some powerful conversations after the trip.



## - CHAPTER 3 -

# Equipping Parents

## After Your Mission Trip

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Here's one way to fail at cooking a meal: You take the time to buy the ingredients, prep the food, season everything just right... and then, in the end, you get distracted. You move on to the next thing just before this thing is over! And even though you did everything right, the food gets overcooked... maybe even burnt.

Mission trips can be like that. We can do everything right but move on to the next thing too quickly instead of paying attention to how the service experience lands in the day-to-day lives of students.

***Mission trips need to be finished well! And that involves parents.***

As you think of how to equip parents for that period after the trip, there are three action steps that stand out: listen, engage, and move forward. Youth workers have an important part in equipping parents to benefit students in each of these areas. Take some time to consider how you might strengthen your next service experience through equipping parents to do the following after the trip.

### **LISTEN**

**Students benefit when parents...** hear what happened on the mission trip. It's true that some students will arrive back home with tons of stories, but others will describe the mission trip as "good" and say it changed them because they are now "tired." For parents to engage in their students' lives, they need a better picture of these important events. And students need more than a three-minute window to summarize what happened. They need people close to them to care enough to listen to the long version and to ask more than once how the service experience is sitting with them several days and weeks and even months after the trip.

**Your part is...** providing opportunities for this kind of sharing to happen. Schedule a time of story-sharing after the trip. That could be a church report or a living room roundtable discussion or something in between. Whatever the context, make sure parents have a clear invitation and know that their presence is greatly desired. Ask every student to share something—a meaningful moment, a shift in perspective, a time God tugged at their heart. Show some pictures too! And say thank you to those who supported the trip. Don't skip formal mission trip sharing, and make sure to encourage other opportunities for students to share their story, especially with parents.



## ENGAGE

**Students benefit when parents...** not only listen but getting involved in the conversation. Their teenager is processing what happened and may still be trying to make sense of the contexts they served in. Setting aside time to sit across from a student and ask great questions will give the student the opportunity to verbalize what they are experiencing. Because parents know their children, they'll be able to make connections that no one else could! Plus, parents can engage by sharing their own parallel experiences with students. This kind of mutual sharing benefits students and strengthens relationships.

**Your part is...** inviting parents to lean into these times of engagement with students and equip them with great questions to ask. Sometimes youth ministry can feel like a bubble to parents. You've probably witnessed parents hovering outside the door to the youth room, feeling like they're not allowed inside. But we need to invite parents into these sacred spaces and conversations! Encourage them to ask great questions and remind them how valuable these times can be to students who are processing big moments in their lives. Also, send them a list of questions. YouthWorks has a whole lot of great post-mission trip questions to get you started. Check out [101 Questions For Your Students >>](#)

## MOVE FORWARD

**Students benefit when parents...** are onboard with bringing their experience back home. The aim is for mission trips to be faith-building experiences, but faith needs legs! It needs to get up and walk around in teenagers' everyday lives. Parents can help students move the mission trip beyond processing to participation in service or deepened devotional practices or other life change. Beyond listening and asking questions, parents should wonder with teenagers, "So what?" So you felt close to God during the trip... so what do you do now? So you saw how important it was to serve at-risk kids... so what will you do with that? How does this meaningful experience change what you do here? And after wondering these things with students, parents can move the conversation onward toward action. Offer to serve alongside them. Make prayer a priority around breakfast each morning. Ask the student to find a cause they care about and match whatever donations the student makes. But do something! And do it together.

**Your part is...** prompting parents toward action alongside students. Hold a meeting where you challenge parents to make a real plan with their students after the mission trip. Additionally, you can offer opportunities for parents to serve alongside students locally, or you might find a devotional and challenge students and parents to go through it during the month after your mission trip. Finally, if you're going on the mission trip, be an example by asking your spouse or friend to take this "move forward" step with you when you return. Share the results with parents as you encourage them to do the same.

It can be easy to move on from the mission trip once it's over, but so often committing to the final step greatly impacts the result. Don't miss your opportunity to equip parents to listen, engage, and move forward with their students after their upcoming mission trip!



## - ADULT LEADER -

# PREP & PROCESSING

*Use the following prompts to think through how this chapter applies directly to your ministry and what your next steps should be to engage the parents of your students.*

1. Listen, Engage, and Move Forward: What's hard about getting parents to process with students in those ways after the trip?

2. What are some ways you can involve parents in the ways you are already doing each of the following:

**Listening.** Giving students' a place to process.

**Engaging.** Sharing insights and connections in response to students' sharing.

**Moving Forward.** Challenging students to do something with what they experienced.

3. Beyond what you are already doing with students, what are some tangible ways you can empower parents to listen, engage and move forward with their student?



## - PARENT GUIDE -

# 3 WAYS TO PROCESS THE TRIP WITH YOUR STUDENT

*Parents play an important role in helping students make sense of what they experienced! Use the below processing ideas to have meaningful conversations with your teenager about their mission trip. Remember, processing doesn't happen all at once, so spread the processing out over the next weeks and months. After you've read through all three, consider which will be the most challenging for you. Use the back of this page to track how you listen, engage, and move forward with your teenager. Talk with other parents about this process.*

- 1. LISTEN.** Take time to truly hear what happened on the mission trip. It's true that some students will arrive back home with tons of stories, but others will describe the mission trip as "good" and say it changed them because they are now "tired." To really understand the experience, it might take patience to unravel the story of the mission trip. Remember that your student needs more than a three-minute window to summarize what happened. They need people close to them to care enough to listen to the long version and to ask more than once how the service experience is sitting with them several days and weeks and even months after the trip. Be patient but persistent as you help your student process the experience.
- 2. ENGAGE.** Look for ways to not only listen but get involved in the conversation. Your teenager is processing what happened and may still be trying to make sense of the contexts they served in. Setting aside time to sit across from your teenager and ask great questions will give them the opportunity to verbalize what they are experiencing. Because you know your son or daughter best, you'll be able to make connections that no one else could! Plus, you can engage by sharing your own parallel experiences. This kind of mutual sharing benefits students and strengthens relationships.
- 3. MOVE FORWARD.** Get onboard with bringing your student's experience back home. The aim is for mission trips to be faith-building experiences, but faith needs legs! It needs to get up and walk around in teenagers' everyday lives. You can help move the mission trip beyond processing to participation in service or deepened devotional practices or other life change. Beyond listening and asking questions, wonder with teenagers, "So what?" So you felt close to God during the trip... so what do you do now? So you saw how important it was to serve at-risk kids... so what will you do with that? How does this meaningful experience change what you do here? And after wondering these things with students, move the conversation onward toward action. Offer to serve alongside them. Make prayer a priority around breakfast each morning. Ask the student to find a cause they care about and match whatever donations the student makes. Just do something! And do it together.



# How Did I Do

## in my post-mission trip conversation with my student?

Add to each of the below columns after each mission trip conversation you have with your teenager.

How was I able to  
**LISTEN?**

How was I able to  
**ENGAGE?**

How was I able to  
**MOVE FORWARD?**





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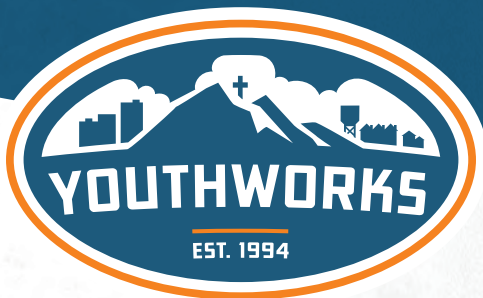
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