



# PARENT & GUARDIAN PROCESSING GUIDE

You might not be going on your student's mission trip, but as a parent or guardian, you play an important role in the way they experience their trip after it's over! You see, a big part of the mission trip experience is what a student does with the trip after it's over. How will they apply what they've learned? How will it change the way they act? How will it impact their relationship with God?

As a consistent presence in your teenager's life, you can continue the influence of the trip well beyond your student's return. Use the following ideas to help your student connect service in another community with life back home.

## PROCESSING IDEAS

*Processing is not an interrogation but – as its name suggests – part of a process you can invite your student into. Here are some ideas to enrich your conversations.*

**Take part in processing.** Research shows that youth most benefit from a two-way conversation where the parent or guardian shares their story with the teenager. While you don't want to dominate the conversation, be willing to answer the same questions your teenager is. It is valuable for them to see your faith in process.

**Spread it out.** While it might be easy to think of processing as a one-time event to check off the list, thinking through what happened and figuring out how to apply it will take time. Remember, it's a *process*! So keep asking questions. Keep thinking back and looking forward with your student.

**Find a safe space.** The setting of your conversation matters. Pick a comfortable place where your student can feel safe sharing important things. And *time* is an even more important factor. Find a space where they don't feel rushed or preoccupied.

**Talk in transit.** Make the most of your drive times by asking some questions while driving. Maybe make it a point to have a "question of the drive" each day. Take time to truly listen and share your own answer to each question.

**Make an event.** Churches will often have an event where students get to share about their mission trip. Have an event that focuses just on your student. It could be just your family, or you could include friends or extended family. Going out for dinner, gathering for a living room conversation or simply grabbing coffee together can all ascribe value to what was just experienced.

**Write it down.** If your student is a writer or keeps a journal, have them write down what they experienced and have them share it. Also, encourage them to send a letter to supporters and friends.

**Create a tradition.** Find a time each day or week when you talk with your student. The days following their mission trip are a great time to launch a new tradition.

**JUST LISTEN!** There are some great ideas on this page, but if you do nothing else, make sure you just take time to listen to your student after their mission trip. And really pause to listen well! Often after mission trips, students have hours of stories, ideas and questions, but the people in their lives give them only minutes of attention. Life-change might launch on a mission trip, but what happens during the days after determine if that change will travel with them. Seek to be part of the positive life-change your student can experience after his or her trip. Check out this blog post for additional thoughts: <https://www.youthworks.com/difficulty-of-returning-home>

## GREAT FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS

- What was most exciting?
- What surprised you on your trip?
- What was the most important thing you learned?
- What were the three biggest things you did on this trip that you've never done before?
- Where did you see God during your trip?
- What did you miss most about home?
- How did God open your eyes during the trip?
- What made you angry? Sad? Happy?
- Who is one person you met that you won't forget?
- In what ways did you need to rely on God?
- How did the way you see others change during your trip?
- What is something you think you should do now that the trip is over?
- Why do you think God wanted you to go on this trip?
- How did this trip change you?
- What part of the trip helped you get to know Jesus better? In what ways did you get to know Jesus better?
- What did you learn about yourself on this trip?
- Are there any ways we can keep serving the community you were in? How could we do that?



## EXPERIENCE THE THEME WITH YOUR STUDENT

Students benefit from being asked questions about their developing faith, but also seeing the faith of adults in practice – especially the faith of their parents and trusted adults in their lives. These two pages have information about YouthWorks’ summer 2024 theme, Rooted. We invite you to process what your student is processing this week.

Here’s how: Read the below theme description and Scripture passage – the same passage your student will hear and discuss during the corresponding day of their mission trip. Think through the questions below. Take time to answer each question on a separate piece of paper. When your student returns, schedule a few meeting times – maybe take them out for food or coffee once a week for the next five weeks and reflect on and discuss one of the themes each day. Rereading Scripture is great repetition. This type of process could be very effective in helping them tie the mission trip experience to life back home. So let’s get started! Here’s an overview of our 2024 theme, which is based in Ephesians 3:14–21:

*Being rooted in Christ allows us to show others the boundless riches of God’s love and experience it for ourselves. As our roots grow deeper, we have a greater understanding of how wide and long and high and deep God’s love is for us and the world. When we are rooted and established in love, we can’t be shaken, and Jesus uses us to love and serve others. Picture a healthy plant – maybe it’s a tree, your favorite flower or a big tomato plant. You’re probably picturing what is growing above ground. But the roots are just as important! Roots take up the nutrients and water that the plant needs to thrive, and they keep it secure in the ground.*

*Just like a thriving forest or meadow full of individual plants, we can grow deeper in our faith together, producing good fruit as we serve and love communities. This summer we will dive into one of Paul’s letters to the early Church, learning practical ways to be spiritually healthy – to be filled with the fullness of God both on the trip and back home.*

### PART 1: STAY CONNECTED

**SCRIPTURE:** Ephesians 3:14–21, John 15:1–5

**BIG IDEA:** Being rooted in Christ allows us to show others God’s love and experience it for ourselves.

#### RELFECTION:

- What does it look like for your roots to go deeper in God’s love?
- What are some ways you can stay connected to the vine (AKA: Jesus)?
- As you strengthen your connection with Jesus, what are some fruit—or positive outcomes—that you hope for in your own life?

**PRAY TOGETHER:** *God, we ask you to strengthen us by your Spirit—not a brute strength but a glorious inner strength. And Jesus, live in us as we open the door and invite you in. Amen.*

### PART 2: PLANT ROOTS

**SCRIPTURE:** Ephesians 3:18–19, Matthew 7:24–27

**BIG IDEA:** When we are rooted and established in God’s love, hearing God’s word and living it out, we have a firm foundation.

#### RELFECTION:

- Why could it be important to focus on what God says in Scripture before we go serve others?
- Rains, floods and winds pummel the house in Jesus’ story. What has helped you get through difficult experiences? What was holding you up?
- Since you are meant to learn and follow what Jesus taught, what are ways you can build upon a firm foundation?

**PRAY TOGETHER:** *Jesus, we pray that we would be rooted and established in your love. And that from this firm foundation, we would have power to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge. Amen.*

### PART 3: GROW TOGETHER

**SCRIPTURE:** Ephesians 3:18, Colossians 1:9-12, Mark 2:1-12

**BIG IDEA:** While we as individuals can have roots that grow deep in the love of Christ, Paul prays that you would know God's love, together, with God's holy people. And *together* we can share Jesus' love with others.

#### REFLECTION:

- What is a way you were able to love like Jesus on your trip? When did someone love YOU like Jesus does?
- How have others been important to your own growth toward Jesus? Name a few specific examples.
- For you, what might be possible within a community of Jesus-followers that wouldn't be possible on your own?

**PRAY TOGETHER:** *Jesus, we ask that with both feet planted firmly on love, in partnership with all your followers, we'll be able to take in the extravagant dimensions of your love. Help us to reach out and experience the breadth of your love—test its length, plumb the depths, rise to the heights! May we live our lives in the fullness of you. Amen.*

### PART 4: SOW GOOD

**SCRIPTURE:** Galatians 6:7-10

**BIG IDEA:** A healthy plant with healthy roots still needs care and attention – it needs water, good soil, the right amount of sun, and more! We can provide care and attention to our own spiritual health, so we can grow deep roots and have good fruit.

#### REFLECTION:

- What are some ways you like to connect with God? *Some examples: prayer, worship music, art, dance, nature, silence, journaling, encouraging others, serving, learning about God at church, reading the Bible...*
- Galatians 6:10 says, "As we have opportunity, let us do good to all people." What opportunities do you have for doing good back home?
- If we harvest what we sow, what specific actions can you take in the next couple weeks to nourish your growth toward those opportunities for doing good?

**PRAY TOGETHER:** *Jesus, even though our minds cannot fully understand the greatness of your love for us and others, let us experience it today. And make us complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from you. Amen.*

### PART 5: IMMEASURABLY MORE

**SCRIPTURE:** Ephesians 3:20-21, Philippians 2:1-11b, John 13:1-17

**BIG IDEA:** God can do immeasurably more than we could ask or imagine. At the same time, Jesus embodied a servant by washing his disciple's feet! We are invited to serve others in the same humble way, giving the glory back to Jesus.

#### REFLECTION:

- How has God brought about growth in your life this week?
- As you think about the ways you've served others and moved toward Jesus this week, what is a way you'd like to continue to grow back home?

#### PRAY TOGETHER:

*May we strengthen our connection with Christ, finding a firm foundation, as we learn and follow his way.*

*May we grow together, with other Jesus-followers as we carry each other toward Christ.*

*May we plant seeds of service and love, and trust God to grow what is good in and around us.*

*May we trust in God, who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to God's power that is at work within us.*

*By that power, may we produce generously, grow steadily, and be rooted firmly.*

*Amen.*