

Supporting & Developing Adult Volunteers

THROUGHOUT YOUR NEXT
MISSION TRIP



CHRIST-CENTERED MISSION TRIPS

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INTRODUCTION

Use this entire guidebook in preparation for your next mission trip! Being intentional with leadership opportunities for your volunteer leaders takes preparation and planning. You can maximize the content of this resource by using it to make mission trip plans early. For example, planning now how you want to respond to leaders when things don't go as planned will help you communicate a consistent message about flexibility before, during and after the trip. Use this resource to make a cohesive plan from the beginning.

This guidebook is divided into three chapters focusing on before, during and after your mission trip. Each chapter includes ideas for developing adult leaders, prep and processing questions for you, and a volunteer team guide for applying the ideas with the adults on your trip.

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

- **Read each chapter on your own, with a friend in youth ministry or with a key leader on your trip.**
Each chapter is meant to spark your imagination for how best to support and develop your leaders before, during and after the 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 create intentional conversations with your team of volunteers.
- **Implement the Volunteer Team Guides with your leaders.**
This is where the processing meets practical application. Use the Volunteer Team Guides to begin implementing what you've read in the chapters and see how your adult leaders are doing at each phase of the trip. Use what you learn from your leaders to challenge, encourage and develop them.

Thanks for caring about adult volunteers! We hope this resource helps you deepen your upcoming mission trip and strengthen your youth ministry.

- CHAPTER 1 -

Preparing Volunteers

Before Your Mission Trip

It's always nice when the adults we bring along on youth mission trips are veterans, but that's often not the reality. It's possible you'll have a parent, college student, bus driver or random adult from your congregation joining a mission trip with little to no experience or training in youth ministry or missions. Don't stress out! Instead, recognize the great opportunity in front of you to lead your leaders well!

No matter what the experience of the adults on your next trip, you can prepare them for a great service experience with teenagers. Here are three things you can do to prepare your volunteers as they prepare for your next mission trip.

1. SET ROLE EXPECTATIONS.

It's important to get on the same page as your leaders. Help them understand their purpose on the mission trip is much more than that of a chaperone! Sure, they need to be on the lookout for safety, drive the van and be the responsible party in the group. But leaders are also the ones who can move an ordinary trip from "good" to "life-changing." That happens when they are empowered to encourage student leadership, engage in the experience and take time to process with teenagers.

YouthWorks does a great job setting expectations for adult leaders with a whole packet of information, including an Adult Leader covenant laying out 10 roles leaders fill during the mission trip: processor, participant, team player, motivator, servant leader, tone-setter, communicator, activator, safety champion and expectations advocate. Take time to talk through each of these roles with your adult leaders so they understand the vital part they play during the trip.

2. USE THEIR STRENGTHS.

Let's face it. You need other adult leaders on your mission trip! And not in a ho-hum, "I guess if I have to" sort of way. You need other adults for their logistical support, for their relational investments and for their diversity of strengths! When you put together your team of leaders, recognize that they have a lot to offer. Look for unique opportunities for them to contribute to the tenor of your trip.

What does that look like? Well, think through what you're good at and identify what you're not. For example if you're not strong on organization and logistics, get one or two leaders who are. Beyond simply recognizing that gift in others, this is a great opportunity to tell a leader why you value them and how you see their strengths as an asset to the team. Then ask them, "Will you use this specific strength to help this mission trip be great?" If they say yes, let them know a few areas in which they can do that.

Of course, adults are still in process, so although the mission trip is about developing the faith of students and serving a community, it can also help strengthen adults' vision for leadership. As your leaders walk alongside students during mission trip prep, make it your job to walk alongside adult leaders. Help them understand their own potential for growth during this upcoming service experience.

3. EQUIP LEADERS WITH GREAT RESOURCES.

It's a lot easier to do a job when you're given the right tools. Give your leaders an edge by resourcing them well. Here are three things to do as you give leaders tools for the upcoming trip:

Equip leaders early.

If at the next meeting you're giving everyone on the team a handout on cultural awareness, it won't hurt to send that handout to leaders in advance. That will allow them to be half-a-step ahead of students, helping them lead the conversation and ask better questions. At very least, you're going to garner some appreciation from the adults on the trip and give them greater ownership.

Equip leaders often.

Check in with leaders during the months and weeks leading up to the trip. Find out what questions they have and get them answers in a timely manner. Use the space before the trip to invite them into deeper learning about the place you're going and the service you're doing. Think through a schedule of what and when to communicate with leaders as the trip date gets closer.

Equip leaders well.

There are lots of useful things you can share with adults around how to lead a successful mission trip. Here are a few ideas to get you started:

- Invite leaders to read and discuss blog posts about leading students on mission trips (such as this one about service and cell phones, this one about respectful service, or this one about mission trip preparation).
- Equip leaders with written logistical information, such as schedules, addresses and information about projects.
- Educate leaders about the place you are going to serve. You might share a documentary or article or something as simple as a Wikipedia page.
- Challenge engaged leaders to take a deep dive into learning about respectful service by reading a book, such as *When Helping Hurts*.

When you take the time to prepare your leaders, everyone benefits—the adult leaders who get more from the trip, the students who are led well, the community you'll serve, and you too! Don't miss the opportunity to intentionally walk alongside your leaders as you prepare for your 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 develop your volunteer team.

1. On your upcoming mission trip...
How many leaders do you want to bring? ____
Who are the volunteers who are already committed to going?

Who are the adults who haven't confirmed but you want to join?

2. Write a list of roles you expect adult leaders to fill on your next mission trip. If you like, use some of the 10 roles mentioned in part one of this chapter.

After you've written the roles...

Draw a star next to the roles that you feel your leaders will most easily fulfill.

Underline the roles you feel might get missed if you don't champion them.

3. What are your personal strengths and weakness as a leader that might be a factor on this mission trip?

Strengths

Weaknesses

Write the names of each leader you have so far. Next to each of their names, write the strengths they bring into this mission trip and how they might be used (especially if they compliment any of the areas you are weak in).

4. What are some specific ways you want to equip leaders well for this mission trip? Include names or descriptions of a couple resources you want to provide for volunteers.

Have your volunteer leaders fill out the following Volunteer Team Guide. Use the answers to get a better sense of where each volunteer is at with their preparation, expectations and needs for this trip. Consider what you can do to encourage them in their preparation.



- VOLUNTEER TEAM GUIDE -

PREPARE FOR THE MISSION TRIP

1. As you understand it, what's your job on this mission trip?
2. What are a few of your skills, gifts or experiences that might be helpful on this mission trip?
3. As you lead students, what are some hopes you have about how you'll develop or change during this mission trip?
4. What questions do you still have about this trip and your role?
5. Beyond answers to questions, what do you need from the trip leader to have a meaningful and successful mission trip?



- CHAPTER 2 -

Caring for Volunteers During Your Mission Trip

It's no secret that leaders are an important factor in your upcoming mission trip experience. Whether you've put together a dream team or begged for whatever adults would say yes, there are things you can do to walk alongside your leaders during the trip to help care for them.

Here are three simple things you can do to care for your volunteers during your next mission trip:

ENCOURAGE

Entering a new context, getting on a new schedule, leading lots of teenagers all week—these can combine to form a really amazing week for adults on your trip. For these same reasons, of course, mission trips can also be demanding for the leaders you bring. That's why your encouragement is vital to a positive experience for your volunteers.

Finding opportunities to encourage other adults on the trip can make all the difference! Look for the little things you can do as you serve alongside leaders. Let them know how much you appreciate them, both one-on-one and in front of the group. Offer affirmation when you see them doing things well. Acknowledge when things are hard. Check in to see if there's anything you can do to help them have a great week. Even before the trip, plan on a few affirming things you can do, like getting them their favorite snack or bringing along some thank you cards to slide them during the week.

Of course, one other important way to encourage your volunteers is through prayer. Pray that God would be meeting them where they're at and strengthening them all week. And don't be shy about asking how you can be in prayer for them. They'll appreciate when you do.

Don't miss valuable opportunities to encourage your leaders during your mission trip. When you do, you'll be strengthening your relationship with them and giving them a more positive mission trip experience.

PROCESS

Mission trips can be big in the faith development of students, but it doesn't stop there. Time and again, leaders also gain a bigger perspective of God's kingdom through their involvement in service experiences. That means they need some of the same conversational care as students. You can help do this!

Take time during the week to step aside with leaders and talk about what's going on with them. Ask intentional questions and dig into their experience each day. Ask what was new, what was surprising, what was good and what was difficult. Listen carefully and ask follow-up questions.

When you process with leaders, you just might help them open their eyes to the things God is doing in and through them during the week. At very least, though, you'll be showing them an example of what it looks like to process with the students they are helping lead.

CONTEXTUALIZE

As your group engages with the community, they will likely encounter situations that they don't completely understand, especially if the culture of the community is different than their own. The danger is that what is unexpected can quickly be categorized as negative. When unexpected interactions occur, you can help your leaders know how to respond by contextualizing those experiences.

Contextualizing goes beyond processing. Whereas processing helps a person name what happened, contextualizing exposes the bigger picture of what's going on. For example, imagine your group meets a man in a homeless shelter who doesn't seem at all thankful for your help serving food. Leaders are disheartened by the way he speaks to some of the students, and they tell you that this put a damper on the entire day. Processing will help leaders name what happened and affirm their feelings along the way. Contextualizing, though, moves toward understanding. You can ask questions like, "Why do you think the man responded that way?" and "What can we learn from this situation?" These will move the conversation past the experience toward deepened understanding.

Contextualization doesn't require you to have all the answers. What it does require is curiosity, teachability, and positivity. When you positively engage as a learner with unexpected situations that arise, you give your leaders permission to do the same.

Your intentionality with volunteers during the trip can make their experience great! But pan out a little and it's easy to see that a great experience for leaders trickles down to a great experience for students. So take care of your students by taking great care of the leaders who have sacrificed their time and energy to join you on your 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 develop your volunteer team.

1. What are a few ways others have encouraged you during a mission trip or similar experience? How could someone encourage you on this upcoming trip?
2. This chapter suggested buying leaders their favorite snacks, speaking words of encouragement, bringing along thank you cards and praying for leaders. What are three intentional strategies you want to use to encourage your adult volunteers on the upcoming mission trip?
3. What are three processing questions you want to have up your sleeve to ask adult leaders during your mission trip?
4. Think of the leaders on your trip. How well do you foresee your team of adults being able to contextualize unexpected events? How can you lead your leaders well in this area?
5. You need encouragement and processing too! Who is a leader on the trip that you can rely on to come alongside you to encourage and process with? Or, if you don't feel you have that person on the trip, who could you ask to send encouraging texts and questions from home? Share with them your answer to question #1, as well as anything else that will encourage you during your trip.

On the second or third day of the trip, use the attached Volunteer Team Guide to take the pulse of your volunteer team. Have them fill it out and return it to you or use it as guide for one-on-one or group discussion. Find encouraging ways to process with them and respond to their answers.

- VOLUNTEER TEAM GUIDE -

PROCESS THE MISSION TRIP SO FAR

1. What has been the best part of this trip so far?
2. If you could change one thing about the way this trip is going, what would it be?
3. What do you think God wants to show you personally through this mission trip?
4. What's something that would be encouraging for you at this point in the trip?
5. What's something you could use prayer for during the rest of this week?



- CHAPTER 3 -

Serving Volunteers

After Your Mission Trip

Maybe you've seen a race where the runners go great distances only to burn out or seize up on the last leg of the race. It's a real disappointment because even if the race is run well it doesn't count for much if the runner can't make it through the last little bit. The key is to push through and finish well at the end.

That same is true of mission trips. We can expend enormous effort to prepare and participate in a mission trip, but if we aren't willing to put in some energy on the last little bit, we'll fall just short of a meaningful experience for our students and leaders.

The finish line is not the end of the trip. It's when team members find application from the trip in their everyday lives.

Here are a few ways to finish well with your volunteer leaders in the final leg—after you return from the trip.

THANK VOLUNTEERS

It's a small thing. It's a simple thing. But it's a thing that often gets missed in the shuffle. Thank the adults who take an entire week or more out of their regular schedule to care for students during a mission trip.

When you thank your volunteers, go out of your way a little. Buy them a keepsake, write them a meaningful note and thank them in front of others. Here are a few specific ideas:

- During the last night of the mission trip, give them a gift of appreciation and recognize their sacrifice in front of the whole team.
- During a church-wide report on the mission trip, have those leaders stand and thank them for coming.
- After the trip is over, take time to write a thank you card with specific ways you were thankful for their contribution to the trip.
- After the trip, ask the leaders out or have them over for a dinner to celebrate a successful mission trip.

- Create fun awards for each leader—like “Most Miles Driven” or “Most Excitable” or “Earliest Riser”—and present certificates during a post-trip team meeting. Accompany each award with an encouraging story and a heartfelt thank you.

However you do it, make thanking leaders an intentional priority after the trip.

EMPOWER LEADER PROCESSING

Don’t miss the fact that, right alongside students, leaders can learn and grow from the mission trip experience. Ask leaders what this mission trip meant for them and how their lives will be different as a result of going on this trip. Expect some of the same development from leaders after the trip as you do of students.

Here are some great questions to ask leaders (and students too) after the trip:

- Why do you think God wanted you on this trip?
- How did this trip change your perspectives about life, God, yourself, others, etc.?
- How did this trip ignite new passions within you? In other words, what did you notice that you really cared about during this trip?
- How did this trip expose new possibilities in your life, your relationship with God or your relationship with others?
- What specific possibilities is God inviting you to pursue now that the trip is over?

When you expect leaders to make sense of their mission trip experience, you are inviting them to lead students in the same process. Instead of telling leaders to merely point the way forward for students, you are empowering them to walk alongside students into meaningful mission trip follow-up.

CHALLENGE ADULTS TOWARD FUTURE LEADERSHIP

As a result of going on a mission trip, we want students to make service a part of their everyday engagement with the world around them. Why would we expect anything less of adults who went on the trip? In the same way you walked with and prepared your leaders for service before and during the mission trip, walk with them after it’s over. Help them identify what God might be pointing them toward now that they are back home.

Here are a few ways you might point adults forward in their leadership after the mission trip:

- Emphasize the part of processing where you help leaders (and students) commit to a real plan for serving those around them.
- Recognize and affirm leadership qualities you see in leaders and help them think through what’s next.

- Make space for intentional conversations with leaders, asking them to make a plan for at least one change, then hold them accountable to that change. (If possible, set this up as an expectation before the trip, then follow through after the trip.)
- Offer service and leadership opportunities within your church or youth group to adults not already engaged with church ministries. (Inviting prospective leaders on a mission trip could be a great way to vet them for ongoing leadership within the youth ministry.)

Take the time to think through which of these or other steps you could take with your leaders. You'll multiply the impact of the mission trip when you intentionally point adults forward into new leadership opportunities.

Don't stop short of the finish line with adult volunteers! Caring for leaders after the trip will complement the way they remember this experience, move them forward in their own faith journey and increase the likelihood that they'll say yes to next year's 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 develop your volunteer team.

1. What will you do to thank volunteers in a meaningful way after the trip?
2. What do you want your leaders to get out of this trip? Name some general things for all of them as well as specific things for each leader going.
3. What are two things you can do after the trip to intentionally help leaders process what they experienced during the trip?
4. What are some potential avenues of leadership you or your church could offer adults after the trip?
5. What is your personal plan for how you will process your mission trip and allow what you experience to impact your life afterward?

After the trip, use the attached Volunteer Team Guide to help your volunteers process the experience and think about what might be next in their leadership, service and relationship with God.

- VOLUNTEER TEAM GUIDE - POST-TRIP PROCESSING

Even though this was a student mission trip, we as adult leaders took something from it too! Use the following questions to continue thinking through what you experienced during our trip.

1. As you think back on the mission trip, what are a few things you are thankful for?
2. What part of the trip was difficult for you? What do you think God wants you to take from that difficulty?
3. Why do you think God wanted you on this mission trip?
4. What aspect of your experience do you need to process further?
5. Service experiences can help us see opportunities for change in our lives. What is one change you think God is inviting you to make in your everyday life as a result of going on this trip?

Challenge: Choose a person in your life who is a good question-asker and listener. Ask them to coffee or some other context for a conversation about your trip. Talk with them about your trip, sharing your answers from this guide. Especially share with them about a change you would like to make and perhaps even ask them to keep you accountable to that change.

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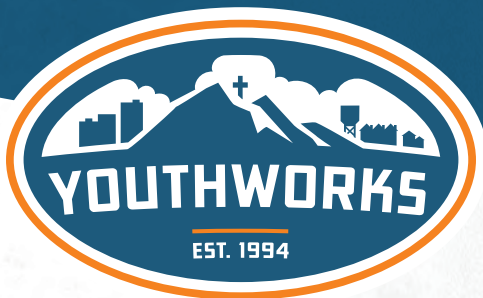
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