



5 SPIRITUAL DANGERS

**LEADER'S
OUTLINE**

OF MISSION TRIPS

INTRO

Begin by talking about the importance of physical safety on the mission trip. You might reference expectations, safe practices and other precautions. Do this in a creative way – perhaps by bringing along mission trip safety equipment.

One of the things we think about a lot when it comes to mission trips is how to stay safe – how to avoid physical harm. To remind us of how we want to be safe, I've brought along a few pieces of safety equipment.
Have someone come up and put on each piece of safety equipment.

- * Closed-foot shoes
- * Kitchen gloves
- * Goggles & Mask
- * Water Bottle

Send person back off-stage wearing the equipment.

TRANSITION

Transition from the idea of physical safety to the concept of spiritual safety – something that is just as important but that we may think far less about. Just as we can do things that may harm us physically during a mission trip, there are things that can harm us spiritually.

We often focus on staying safe physically on mission trips – and that's a good thing! – but there is also the potential of getting hurt spiritually. So we want to spend a little time talking about the Spiritual Dangers of Mission Trips. These are 5 Spiritual Danger that we want to avoid during our mission trip.

DANGER #1: FORGETTING OUR OWN BROKENNESS

Help students see that there are many different kinds of brokenness – both internal and external. Communicate that, although they will see brokenness during the trip, brokenness – caused by sin in the world – is part of all our stories. Help them think through where brokenness exists in their lives.

On our mission trip we might...

- ...serve the homeless at a soup kitchen.
- ...see financial poverty in a neighborhood where we serve.
- ...visit elderly people who may struggle with loneliness.

It is likely that at some point you see signs outward brokenness – places people are hurting because of the reality of sin in the world. The danger is that we forget that brokenness is part of our story too. And we all need a Savior to restore us from that brokenness.

Let's take a minute and talk about where brokenness exists in our stories too.

QUESTIONS

- * What forms can brokenness take – both internal and external?
- * Where have you experienced brokenness in your life?

DANGER #2: OVERLOOKING THE BEAUTY IN OTHERS

Encourage your students to see that brokenness is not the whole story of the community you're visiting. The community and the individuals in it also have great beauty. Talk about how your team will be intentional about seeing the beauty in others. Take time during the trip to ask where students saw beauty in others.

How many of you would start want to meet someone like this...

P1: Hi! I'm Sam.

P2: Hi! I'm Kryn.

P1: So nice to meet you.

P2: You too!

P1: So, what are you really bad at?

P2: Excuse me?

P1: You know, what's something you're really ashamed of?... wait, wait, wait... Better question: Who have you *really* hurt lately?

You would never start a conversation like that right?! Looking for flaws is not a good way to begin a relationship, but it can be tempting to do that when we go on a mission trip... to walk into the community and immediately start noticing and looking for all the things that are wrong with it.

Yes. There are things wrong with every community, but I would hate us to miss the beauty of the place we are going to. Although brokenness is part of their story, it is not their whole story – just as the brokenness in your life and in my life is not our whole story.

During our mission trip I want us to be watchful for beauty in the community we're going to. Each day, let's keep each other accountable to look for beauty in the people we meet and the places we serve.

QUESTIONS

- * What was beautiful about the people you met on your last mission trip?
- * What are some questions you'd ask if you were "meeting" the community we're headed to?

ANGER #3: SERVING ONLY THE DESERVING

Help students commit to take joy in serving and not expect a certain response or to anticipate serving only a certain type of person. Take time during the trip to help students refocus on the purpose of serving – not to receive something back but to give without the condition of a certain response.

Maybe on our mission trip we'll meet...

...a cute little girl who, despite having a difficult home life, always listens to your direction and hugs you a lot.

...an elderly widow who is physically and financially unable to paint her own home but will bring you lemonade and make you feel comfortable with her charming personality.

...a homeless man who used to have an addiction but has found Jesus and is working hard to get his life back on track.

Sometimes we hope the people we get to serve are just the right mix of humble and needy and grateful... but that's not always the case. What if instead we meet...

...a kid who doesn't listen and calls you names.

...a homeowner who doesn't seem very thankful for the work you are doing.

...a guy at a shelter who tells you he is angry at God.

Suddenly service might seem less attractive and you might start wondering if these people even deserve your service.

But since when was Christian service built on what people deserve? You and I certainly didn't deserve Christ's sacrifice on the cross for us. When we serve others, we can take joy in the opportunity to be like Jesus regardless of the response. That doesn't mean should give up asking questions about how we can best serve a community, but it does mean that when we serve we do it without demanding a certain response.

QUESTIONS

- * What's wrong with serving people only when we feel like they deserve it?
- * How can you serve joyfully even if the person your serving doesn't respond in the way you expected?

ANGER #4: SEEKING YOUR SERVICE FIX

Help students understand that the mission trip is not the culmination of a year of youth group, but the beginning of a lifetime of service.

Sometimes we think about the mission trip as our big service project for the year. But that's not what it's meant for!

Service isn't a one-time event or a destination on a map. Service is much more like the calendar on which we put our events or the road on which we travel. Service should be an ongoing thread throughout our lives!

After serving his disciples, Jesus told them, "I have given you an example that you should do as I have done for you" (John 13:15). Jesus wasn't suggesting once-in-a-while service; he was telling them about how to live their lives.

The danger of mission trips is that they become your island of service, where you vacation to once a year. Instead, mission trips are meant to be a catalyst that will propel you forward – a drawing back of the bow, a wind up for the pitch, a launch pad experience. Your mission trip is not a grand finale to a year of going to church, but a beautiful beginning to deepened service and love for others.

QUESTIONS

- * Why do you think people sometimes think of mission trips as the year's big service event?
- * How does service play a part in your day-to-day life? How can this mission trip help?

DANGER #5: TELLING THE WRONG STORY

Help students think about the trip as something God is doing that they get to join in. Talk about how they can tell their story before, during and after the trip.

Anyone ever read The Onion? It's a satirical news source that makes up fake news stories. What do you think about this headline of a recent story?

"6-Day Visit to Rural African Village Completely Changes Woman's Facebook Profile Picture"

This is a good place to actually take responses to what students thought of that headline. Why is it funny? Why is it sorta sad? How might it connect to our mission trip?

It's ironic, right? This experience that is supposed to be immensely life-changing, in the end, boils down to a changed profile picture. It's funny, but it's also kinda sad.

Don't you want your mission trip story to be bigger than a changed profile picture?

Like the girl in the headline, we get small stories, when we take the powerful narrative about what God is doing in the world and try to make it about us.

I'm not saying to keep quiet about your mission trip. Tell people about it! I'm not even saying you shouldn't change your profile picture. What I am saying is that we should all think about the story we are telling. The danger is that you will tell a story about you and what you did instead of a far grander story of God what God did in and through you.

QUESTIONS

- * What are some reasons telling God's story is better than telling your story?
- * Before, during and after our trip, how can we tell stories about God instead of about us?

CONCLUSION

At the end, you might hand out cards with these 5 Spiritual Dangers of Mission Trips to help students remember them. You might also ask if students can think of any other spiritual dangers – or you might add some of your own that will help your specific group. Take time to pray about the spiritual safety of your team during their mission trip. Invite students to pray for safety against specific spiritual dangers that may be easy for them to fall into.

Come back to these Spiritual Dangers during and after your trip. Challenge students by asking them how they are doing with avoiding these dangers. Invite conversation by asking what's hard about avoiding these spiritual dangers of mission trips.