



# Going With God

A Short-Term Mission  
Team Leader's Tool Kit

## *What's Next? Transforming Your Short-Term Experience into Long-Term Ministry When You Return Home (Part 3)*

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# Introduction

God has brought your team a mighty long way from the first day you began preparing for this Short-Term Mission (STM) experience – and God is not done with you yet!

This post-trip debriefing and action guide, *What's Next? Transforming Your Short-Term Experience into Long-Term Ministry When You Return Home* is designed to help your team walk through the normal phases of re-adjustment to life back home. It will also help them to reflect on their experience and apply what God has taught them during the trip.

The three sessions cover two main topics:

1. Re-entry to your home culture
  - Debrief and “degrief” the trip
  - Re-entry skills and reverse culture shock
  - Share the story of your STM experience
2. Transforming short-term mission into long-term ministry – reaching out with God’s love
  - Minister at home in the neighborhood, community
  - Maintain a relationship with host country sisters and brothers (e.g. develop a sister church relationship; exchange pastors, youth, laypersons; support our missionaries)
  - Address institutional racism, exploitation, violence (in U.S. foreign policy, global business practices, etc.)
  - Plan for the next cross-cultural mission experience

Fill in the dates when your team will meet on the *Reflection & Action Session Schedule* (at the end of this section) and make sure everyone gets a copy or records the dates in their calendars. You discussed these dates before you left for the trip, but you need to review them with your team before you return home.

*How does God want us to use what we have learned to reach out to others with his love?*

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# Go Global With God!

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*The mission of  
American Baptist  
International Ministries  
is to glorify God in all  
the earth by crossing  
cultural boundaries  
to make disciples of  
Jesus Christ.*

## **If your team members come from different churches:**

Ideally, your team should meet together after you return home for debriefing, mutual support and action planning. It is well worth the effort, even for team members who come from different churches or different regions.

If your team cannot physically meet after your return, you might try a couple of creative ways to still “get together.”

- Schedule a conference call.
- Set up an online chat session or a blog.
- Arrange for a video conference discussion.
- Meet in smaller groups (e.g. all the team members from one church or one city) and then share notes/reflections with the rest of the team.
- Plan a reunion within the first three months and cover all three sessions on one Saturday gathering.

## **Please let us know:**

How can we make this debriefing and action guide even more helpful to STM teams? Please tell us what you liked about this guide and how we can make it more useful to you. Send your comments and suggestions to:

Volunteers in Global Mission  
International Ministries, ABCUSA  
P.O. Box 851  
Valley Forge, PA 19482-0851  
800-222-3872 ext. 2366  
[bimvolunteers@abc-usa.org](mailto:bimvolunteers@abc-usa.org)  
[www.internationalministries.org](http://www.internationalministries.org)

## Reflection & Action Session Schedule

**Date/Time/Place**

**Session**

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Reflection & Action Session 1 – Debriefing & Degriefing  
(within one week of your return)

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Reflection & Action Session 2 – Sharing Our Story  
(one to two weeks after your return)

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Reflection & Action Session 3 – Putting Feet on Our Faith  
(three to four weeks after your return)





“Your love, O Lord,  
reaches to the heavens,  
your faithfulness  
to the skies.”

PSALMS 36:5

## Reflection & Action Session 1

# Debriefing & Degriefing

(within one week of your return)

Before this session, ask team members to bring the completed *Reflections on Coming Home* questionnaire (at the end of this section) to this gathering.

- Encourage the team to bring their individual journals to the session. The Keeper of the Journal should bring the team journal as well.
- Also, ask team members to bring photographs of the trip on a pen drive.
- Make this a fellowship time – ask for volunteers to bring snacks.

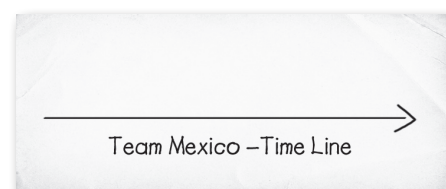
### At a Glance

TIME	TOPIC	SUPPLIES NEEDED
45 min.	<b>Devotional – Remembering God’s Faithfulness</b>	an 8-foot piece of butcher paper (available at most grocery or office supply stores) or two flip chart pages taped together lengthwise, felt markers and/or a box of crayons, masking tape or push pins, sticky notes of various colors  Bible
40 min.	<b>Team Discussion – Re-entry Reflections</b>	<i>Reflections on Coming Home</i> <i>Stages of Culture Shock</i> photographs laptop computer, data projector, and screen popcorn & drinks 😊
5 min.	<b>Action – Seek God’s Direction</b>	

## Devotional – Remembering God’s Faithfulness

### Singing like Miriam and Moses – remembering God’s faithfulness

1. Sing some of your team’s favorite songs together, especially those in the language of your host country. Pray that you will feel God’s presence and comfort during this session.
2. Ask the team to recall what Moses, Miriam, Aaron and all the Israelites did when they made it safely across the Red Sea. [They sang a song of praise and thanksgiving to God, recalling all that God had done to guide and deliver them. See Exodus 15.]
3. Let’s celebrate! Ask the team to remember the many ways they discovered to “watch for God at work” in your host country.
  - Lay out an eight-foot long piece of poster paper on a table or on the floor.
  - Draw a line horizontally across the middle of the paper with an arrowhead at the far right and the name of your team at the top. Alternatively, draw a line with two or three curves across the paper with an arrowhead at the far right.
  - This will be your team’s timeline beginning from your first meeting together. Ask team members to fill in the timeline with major events in the life of the team. Include funny things that happened. Make sure each person has a pen, pencil, marking pen, or crayon. Encourage them to draw pictures or symbols of these events. EVERYONE should participate, not just the good artists or those who print well. Have fun with this exercise!
4. After working for about 10 minutes, pause for a moment and read Psalm 105:1 – 4. Now fill in specific PTL (Praise the Lord!) events or situations on the timeline. These are the “wonderful acts” of God (v. 2) that you want to tell others about. For example, you might write, “PTL – the last \$103 we needed for the trip arrived the day the deposit was due!” “PTL – God used our flat tire detour so we could meet the Ramirez family.” “Pastor Jo’s message caused Yolanda to commit her life to mission work – PTL!”



# PTL!



“Here I am, Lord.

Send me!”

ISAIAH 6:8B

5. Variation. After the team has filled in the major events, ask them to reflect on how this experience affected them personally. Each person should fill out and attach sticky notes that reflect their mood at various times during the trip.
  - Yellow: joyful, excited, a high point
  - Blue: sad, grieving, tired, discouraged, home-sick
  - Red: angry, frustrated, conflict
  - Green: a “God moment” when I saw God at work, an “ah ha!” moment, a moment of spiritual insight when I finally got God’s message

Then ask the team to comment on patterns they notice. Was everyone feeling discouraged or sad on a certain day? Why? Are there some days when some team members are angry while others are having a “God moment?” How is that possible? What can we learn from this experience? What implications does this experience have for how we relate to one another in our church? How might this experience help us to better reach out to people in our community?

6. When everyone is finished – or after about 15 min – have the team step back and appreciate what you have experienced. Ask: Why is there an open-ended arrow on the right? [The story is not over. God wants us to use what we have learned to reach out to others with his love. The arrow reminds us that this was not a vacation that is over and done with so now we can get on with life. On the contrary, our STM experience has changed us forever. Our task now is to ask God, “What’s next?”]
7. Post the timeline on the wall for a couple of weeks if possible. After that, carefully store it away for a team reunion in a few months. Or you may want to use it as part of a training program for next year’s STM team.

## Team Discussion – Reflections on Coming Home

### Reflections on coming home and reverse culture shock

1. Introductory comments: “Our team has traveled, worked, lived, eaten, played and prayed with each other, and you may feel like a family in the Lord. That feeling of being part of a special community will probably be the most difficult and the most helpful part of our re-adjustment to life back home. It may be hard to go back to “the same-old-same-old” after such an intense adventure. Our teammates won’t be with us every day and it may be hard to find time to pray and study the Word as we did each day in our host country.”

2. “At the same time, our teammates will be the ones who will continue to support us in prayer. If we feel depressed, guilty or frustrated during our re-entry to our home culture, it will feel good to talk to a teammate who understands exactly what we’re going through. Together, and with the help of the Holy Spirit, we will not only survive this transition, but we will continue to grow in faith and wisdom.”
3. Ask team members to take a few minutes to fill out the *Reflections on Coming Home* questionnaire [at the end of this section] if they have not already done so.
4. In groups of three or four, share your responses to the questions. Ask each person to share a specific prayer request with his or her small group. Pray for one another.
5. Ask the group to recall the *Stages of Culture Shock* discussed in the last session (8) of Part 1 of this tool kit: *Get Ready! How to Prepare your Short Term Mission Team*. Note that when you experience “reverse culture shock” upon your return home, you go through the same stages. It’s normal!
  - Stage 1 – **On the Honeymoon** often occurs at the airport and for the first day or two at home (“a hot shower, hamburgers, my own bed! – yay!”).
  - Stage 2 – **In the Pit** may begin shortly afterwards and last from a few hours or days to several weeks (“Americans are wasteful, fat, complacent and nobody really wants to hear what I have to say because they are so shallow.”). You wish you were back in the host country. This is reverse culture shock.
  - You make the shift to Stage 3 – **Back on Your Feet** when you begin to recognize the good things about your home and see that God is still teaching you important lessons on your faith journey.
  - Stage 4 – **At Home Again** is a time of anticipation. You sense that God is calling you to serve and learn in this place as well. You find practical ways to reach out to others with God’s love – in your family, church and community. You may even sense God’s calling to future cross-cultural mission.



“My grace is sufficient  
for you...”

2 CORINTHIANS 12:9A

### FOR TEAM LEADERS ONLY

Take some time to rest and process your own feelings apart from the time you spend with the group. Find a person who is willing to help you debrief and reflect on your experience as an STM leader:

- What did God teach you about your leadership and organizational gifts?
- What would you do differently next time?
- What unresolved issues are still lying heavy on your heart? How can you move toward healing?
- How will you honor your need for rest for a couple of days?
- How can your friend pray for you during this time of transition?

### Share pictures from the trip and/or view the video

1. Ask team members to select the 25 - 30 best photos they took and bring them on a flash drive. The team Photographer can transfer the photos to a laptop and create a master file of the best photos from the trip.
2. Ask the team Photographer, to bring his or her best team photos on a laptop or a flash drive. Those members who want copies of the photos can simply transfer them from the laptop to their own flash drive.
3. If you have a team video, get out the popcorn and watch it together. If the video is unedited at this point, you may want to schedule a separate “home movie” night for those who want to watch every minute of it.
4. If you have unedited video footage, ask for a volunteer to edit it down to about an 8 – 10 minute presentation. This will probably take roughly 20 to 30 hours of work.

### Action – Seek God’s Direction

#### Seek God’s direction for turning this short-term experience into long-term commitment and ministry

1. Form a prayer circle and pray for each member of the team.
2. Pray for God’s help to walk through the stages of reverse culture shock with grace.
3. Ask God to guide the team as you begin to think about sharing your story.
4. Pray that God would open your heart to the possibilities for ministry in your own community and in other parts of the world.

## Reflections on Coming Home

1. Describe the one or two images or events that stand out from your trip.
2. What part of this experience was the most challenging to you? What was the easiest?
3. What did you learn about God's mission in the world? How did you see God at work?
4. How has your relationship with God changed as a result of this trip?
5. What did you learn about your team and about team ministry?
6. How would you describe your feelings right now? [joyful, grief-stricken, exhausted, peaceful, grateful, heartbroken, hopeful, confused, resentful, euphoric] Please explain.

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*Remember –  
you're still on  
God's mission!*

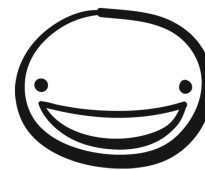
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## Stages of Culture Shock

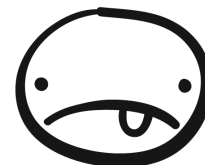
### Stage 1: On the Honeymoon

Everything is GREAT, exciting, “quaint” and interesting. You feel a sense of euphoria. “This is fun!” Things don’t seem that strange or different.



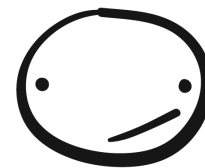
### Stage 2: In the Pit

Everything is “the pits.” Everyone and everything is so different and confusing. “Why can’t they do things the right way here?” Emotions may include anger, irritation or loneliness. A critical spirit dominates your thoughts. This is CULTURE SHOCK. Physical symptoms may include intense homesickness, fatigue (esp. when traveling east), chest pain, depression, guilt or withdrawal from the group.



### Stage 3: Back on Your Feet

Things are beginning to make sense. You are beginning to get oriented, to understand the “reason” behind the customs, and to learn the language. Self-confidence, along with your sense of humor, returns.



### Stage 4: At Home Again

You feel at home in the new culture. You are able to function in the culture and enjoy the differences. You feel a sense of belonging and think about leaving with sadness and grief.

